

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

28. What is the topic of the prayer that closes chapter three? (3:16)
29. How did Paul show that this epistle was a genuine epistle from him? (3:17)
30. What is the benediction of II Thessalonians? (3:18)
31. Quote, or write out, from memory II Thess: 3:1,3,10.
  - 3:1 starts, "Finally, brethren,——."
  - 3:3 starts, "But the Lord is——."
  - 3:10 starts, "For even when we were——."

## Special Studies

### I. THE COMING JUDGE

By Seth Wilson

When Jesus was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, surrounded by the excited throng shouting His praise, the people of the city asked, "Who is this?" And some of the crowd answered, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

How far short their description fell! How little they really understood who He was!

Today, far too many people are thinking of Jesus as only a teacher or prophet from Galilee in the days of long ago. They think that He has had some interesting and important effects upon society. They may respect somewhat His teaching and His following, but they only think that they know Jesus.

No one knows Jesus who thinks that He belongs to the past, or who considers that we have to do only with the moral and social application of His teaching.

He is far more than a prophet in the past. He is a power in the present. And He is the most certain and significant of all the prospects for the future!

Jesus is living and reigning today at the right hand of the Father in heaven, offering His covenant of mercy and the new birth of the Spirit to all who will receive, calling out of the world a people for His own possession. He is coming again to earth to consummate this age, to receive His redeemed ones unto Himself, to purify His kingdom, and to execute the righteous judgment of God upon all the living and the dead.

The gospel of Christ is a message of facts—facts of history, unchangeable as the past naturally is, and sure as historical records and testimony can make them. But they are not just ordinary facts such as might be found in every part of history. They are unique facts of men's experience with God when God came to men in

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human form in the person of Jesus Christ. They are the incomparable facts of His life and works, revealing His divine person and power and His eternal purpose for all men of every age. Thus the gospel is not merely a record of the past. It is even more than the truth regarding our present duty and welfare. It points inexorably to the future. It is most important as a preparation for and a promise of things to come. Predictions are an inseparable and most vital part of the gospel, giving meaning to its facts and purpose to its commandments. The promises and warnings of the Lord help to enlighten and to motivate every believer of His word.

The most important prospects for the future for you and me and everyone are not the prospects of national prosperity or depression or war or conquest of space, but the certain coming of Jesus to end this age and to institute a new order of things.

### WE CAN BE SURE OF HIS COMING

That He is coming is sure because He said so. We, of course, cannot know it or prove it any other way, except to take His word for it. But we can trust Him completely because of the undeniable facts of His first coming which clearly proved His divine character. To anyone who believes in Him as the Son of God the predictions of His word are plain enough to make us very sure that He is coming back in person in visible form.

He said, "If I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3). "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "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" (Matt. 25:31). "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30b). Under oath in court, on trial for His life, Jesus said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming of the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

He made several parables for the purpose of emphasizing the importance of His coming and the need for being watchful and ready for it. "As in the days of Noah . . . so shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-42; Luke 17:26-30). The householder and the thief; the faithful and the wicked servants (Matt. 24:43-51). The foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). The parables of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27).

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Angels said, "This same Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Those whom Jesus sent to preach the gospel He also inspired by His Spirit to guide them into all truth and to make known to them things to come (John 16:13-15). Throughout their preaching and their writings they taught that Jesus was coming again *in person*. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:16). See also Acts 3:20,21; I Per. 1:7; 5:4; II Pet. 3:3,4; James 5:7; Heb. 9:28; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7; I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18; 5:1-4, 23; II Thess. 1:7-10; 2:1,8; I Tim. 6:14,15; II Tim. 4:1,8; Tit. 2:13. The apostolic writers not only speak plainly and directly of Christ's coming, but they also refer to His "appearing", "being manifested," His "presence," the "revelation" of Christ, and the "day of Christ." (e.g. Phil. 1:6,10; I Cor. 5:5; II Thess. 2:2; Heb. 10:25).

Some men say they count 318 times that His coming is mentioned in some manner in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. No doubt some of that number are obscure references, and of some it may be very doubtful whether they are interpreted correctly when they are applied to the second coming of Christ. But definite and plain predictions of that great event are made literally dozens of times such manner that they could not be fulfilled in the conversion or death of individuals, in the beginning of the church, the coming of the Holy Spirit, or the judgment upon Jerusalem. They emphatically predict things which have not happened yet and they could not point to a secret or "spiritual" or invisible coming.

### WHEN? NO ONE KNOWS.

When He is coming, we do not know, because He has not told us that (Matt. 24:36). He has continually emphasized the need to be ready at all times because no one will know when He is to come (See Rev. 16:15; I Thess. 5:2,3; Matt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13). He will come as a thief in the sense that His coming will be unannounced, unexpected and sudden. In the same sense it will be as travail upon a woman with child.

But he has assured us that when He does come it will be evident to all, with power and great publicity, as the lightning in the east

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is seen unto the west, with a great shout and the sound of the trumpet (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:26,27,30,31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).

### WHY HE WANTS US TO KNOW OF THE FUTURE

Our Lord wants us to know some things about the future. He wants us to be warned and prepared for crisis that must come. He wants us to understand the nature of our salvation, and know that this world is not our hope or our permanent home. He wants us to look forward with hope and longing to His coming in glory and to our perfect union with Him whom we love. He wants us to realize that He Himself is our destiny and our exceeding great reward. He wants us to have assurance and comfort in the afflictions and sorrows of life.

He would have us all to be as strong and stedfast as Paul, by having his kind of faith in the "far more exceeding weight of eternal glory" and by looking with him "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Read II Cor. 4:16 to 5:11.

Daily consciousness of the imminent return of Christ will surely prompt more godly living, promote more sacrificial giving, produce more patience and even rejoicing under trials, and purify our motives in all that we do. We need to realize that we do not live our lives to be seen of men, or to "get by" in the world; but we do all our works under His watchful eye, and we shall soon stand before Him to give account.

The heart of Christianity is the vital power of faith, hope, and love—all centered upon Jesus Christ. Any one who does not believe His word enough to hope for His coming and to love His appearing will surely lack the personal force of Christ in his life.

The predictions of His coming should be even to the unbeliever an inducement to heed more seriously Christ's commands and claims, because His coming is a threat to the disobedient as well as a promise to the faithful.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN HE COMES?

The Lord has revealed only a few particulars and some things of the general nature of the great events which will take place when He comes. No doubt there are many things in store for us that we have not been told because we could not grasp and appreciate them now. Very likely some of the things predicted will not happen just as we imagine them. It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell in what order or how close together the following events will come to pass. But we are told that in connection with His coming or after it: the

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dead will be raised (I Thess. 4:16; John 5:28,29); the saved will be with the Lord (John 14:3; I Thess. 4:17); the bodies of the redeemed will be changed into the likeness of the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:52-54; Rom. 8:23-25); the world and the works therein will be burned up (II Pet. 3:11-13); a crown of glory will be given to the faithful (II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4); Christ will execute judgment upon all men (II Tim. 4:1; Jude 14,15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; John 5:22-29; II Cor. 5:10); He will reject many who thought they were saved (Matt. 7:21-23; 22:13,14; Luke 13:25-27; cf. Matt. 13:40-43 and 47-50); the door of salvation will be forever closed (Luke 13:25-28); there will be grief and terror in the hearts of many because they are unprepared to meet Him (Matt. 24:30,50,51; 25:30; Rev. 1:7; 6:14-17; Luke 13:28; I Thess. 5:3; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Whether or not all men are to be judged at one time, or whether there will be two judgments, or three or five, is relatively unimportant. Probably no man knows just how and when it will all be done, but the Lord will take care of it without our figuring it out. The important matter is to be ready for judgment by being in Christ, and to know that "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

Let every sinner remember this fact, and contemplate what it will mean—our Savior will be our Judge! He who once served the sentence of death for us, who now makes intercession for us at the throne of God, who invites all to come unto Him and be saved—it is He who will come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance upon all that know not God and obey not the gospel!

## II. A SECRET RAPTURE CONSIDERED

By Seth Wilson

I truly desire to see people awakened to the reality and tremendous significance of the second coming of our Lord. But to put all the emphasis upon a secret rapture and mysterious disappearance of the saved, as if that were certainly the nature of Christ's coming, is to teach as Bible truth what is at best a doubtful, speculative view of the implications of the Bible.

The Lord's coming is surely and clearly taught; so also is the separation of the saved from the unsaved, the resurrection of those