



“Paul’s Pattern of Praise and Prophecy”

2 Thessalonians 1:1-10

In Acts 16-17, Luke documented how the Apostle Paul and his companions left Thessalonica to avoid being physically attacked by an angry mob the Jews had hired to force them out of the city.

- After a few months, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the new church, and when Paul received Timothy’s report, he wrote his first letter:
 - Encouraging them to remain steadfast in their faith, even in the midst of persecution.
 - Reminding them they had not missed the rapture; Jesus would return to receive His followers as He had promised, and those who died before the rapture would be raised from their graves and caught up together with those who are alive, to meet the Lord in the air.

- Paul’s enemies wrote and distributed a fake letter from Paul, telling the people the Day of the Lord had come; that they were facing the wrath of God.
- Paul penned a second letter, assuring them the Day of the Lord had not come and would not come until the Restrainer was removed, i.e., the Holy Spirit, followed by the revealing of the Antichrist.
- Paul assured them what he was teaching them regarding the rapture of the Church was *“by the word of the Lord.”*

What Paul wrote in these two letters is the clearest teaching on eschatology in the New Testament. His teachings agree with the prophecy of Daniel, the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the revelations received by the Apostle John.

- Even though Paul realized he was addressing some very serious issues and exposing some new revelations regarding the rapture of the Church and the return of Jesus Christ, there is a tenderness in his tone that can only be explained by his absolute trust in the sovereignty of God.
- In fact, Paul admonished those who had taken his teaching on the imminency of the rapture to the extreme, quit their jobs, and were just waiting on the Lord to come and take them out of the world. While Paul encouraged the church to admonish them, he said not to count them as enemies but as “brothers.”

In our desire to stand firm in our convictions, Christians in the 21st century would do well to heed Paul’s pastoral admonitions and realize, as the Apostle James wrote, *“man’s anger does not bring about the righteousness that God desires.”*

- Paul’s passion was for his converts to increase in their love for one another, as he had loved them, so their hearts would be blameless when the Lord called them to “come forth!”

1. Paul’s Pastoral Praise – 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Paul praised the church at Thessalonica for five qualities:

- Their Genuineness – this was a true church of God, for their assembly was primarily for worship and fellowship.
- Their Increasing Faith – which was the result of the severity of persecution they were enduring. Persecution destroys false faith, but it reveals true faith.
- Their love for each other – not emotional sentimentality, but a love that required them to make sacrifices for one another. Persecution reveals the depth of our love for others.
- Their persevering Hope – rather than complain about their suffering, they increased their faith in God, and as their faith in God grew, so did their love for one another.
- Their Kingdom Attitude – their focus was upon the further advancement of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. They trusted God to handle the rest.

2. Paul's Pertinent Prophecy – 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Because of the severity of the persecution they were enduring, some members of the church believed they were experiencing the very wrath of God, which will be poured out upon those who refuse to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

- Paul assured them that was not the case, that the persecution they were enduring was preparing them to meet the Lord with pure hearts, that the Lord would preserve them from the wrath of God which was to come.
- 7 – *“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of God.”*
- In verse 10, Paul introduced the Greek word “Parousia,” which means the arrival of the Lord’s presence.
- At this moment, Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father, making intercession for us as our High Priest.
- But the day is coming when Jesus shall be “revealed,” and we shall see Him, and we shall love Him.

- For those who live each day in the imminency of His return, the Parousia will be the arrival of His presence, and He will remove us from this world and take us to be with Him forever.
- But for those who rejected Him as their Savior and Lord, His return to this earth will be an apocalypse, the unveiling of the One whom they rejected.
- Paul used three prepositional phrases to describe the second coming of Christ:
 - Verse 7 – He will be *“revealed from heaven.”*
 - In Acts 1:9, two angels told Jesus’ disciples that He would return the same way He ascended: Physically, visibly, and in a cloud.
 - Verse 7 – He will be *“revealed with His mighty angels.”*
 - *In Matthew 25, Jesus said, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, all the angels will come with Him.”*
 - Verse 8 – He will be *“revealed in flaming fire.”*
 - The fire of His judgment will come later. This fire is the Shekinah glory of His Holiness.

Paul said this glorious event would produce two results:

- Verses 6,8 – Paul said the second coming of Christ will bring retribution to those who refused God’s gift of salvation.
 - Retribution means to “payback,” and when He returns, Jesus will repay those who troubled us in this life.
 - Isaiah 66:15 – *“The Lord is the avenger.”*
 - However, the Lord’s retribution is not out of anger or in seeking revenge, but in justice.
 - Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap, and just as God brings salvation to those who sow their faith in Jesus

Christ, He will also bring damnation to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ.

- Verse 7,10 – Paul said the second coming of Christ will bring relief to those who received God’s gift of salvation, those who confessed their faith in Christ during the Tribulation.
 - The Greek word translated in our English Bible as “relief” is “anesis,” which means the absence of tension, the absence of pressure, and the relief from trials.
 - When Jesus comes again, the pressures of life will be removed, and the temperament of life will be relaxed.
 - Believers will enjoy three kinds of rest:
 - The rest of salvation – Matthew 11, Jesus told those who were trying to earn their acceptance with God through their good works, *“Come unto Me...and I will give you rest.”*
 - The Millennial rest – Acts 3:19-21, *“Times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord, for God will send Jesus Christ who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive, until the restoration of all things.”*
 - The Eternal rest – Revelation 14:13 – *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest.”* That eternal rest is the result of God’s justice for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

“When He comes in that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired among all those who believe, [you will be there] because our testimony among you was believed.”

2 Thessalonians 1:10