

## Living with the Future in Mind The Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians

For so much of our lives we look to the future and wait for it with great hope & anticipation – we want to talk, walk, go to school, drive, graduate, go to college, get a job, get married, start a family, be empty nesters, retire, etc.

We are always looking ahead, hoping that what is in our future will bring us fulfillment, joy, greater purpose! But none of these things can measure up to what is still in our future as followers of Jesus Christ!

We have not been promised paradise on this side of heaven, but we do have hope for paradise to come when the new heavens & the new earth are ushered in at the second coming of Jesus!

From the Old Testament all the way to the end of the New, there is found an everlasting hope for the future of God's people!

**Isaiah 65:17-25** – *“For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.”* – Vs. 1

**Revelation 21:1-5a** – *“Behold I am making all things new”* – Vs. 5

This is the testimony of Scripture! Even Jesus, when He walked this earth, continually pointed His followers to this eternal reality! **John 14:1-3**

The apostles too held out this truth as their primary message!

**2 Corinthians 5:1** – *“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”*

**2 Peter 3:13** – *“But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”*

In the New Testament, no topic is mentioned more frequently than the second coming of Jesus, and the glory that follows for those who believe!

One scholar observed that *“Some allusion to Jesus' return comes, on average, once in every 13 verses, from Matthew to Revelation!”*

If this theme is so prevalent in Scripture, then it must be important for us to believe & live in response to! One cannot know Christ, & follow Him, w/out grasping the importance of what the future holds for us in His return!

Every song we sang this morning was about the hope we have in Christ, and all 3 songs ended with descriptions of His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!

- *“We believe in the resurrection, and He's coming back again”*
- *“When He shall come with trumpet sounds, oh may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone. Faultless stand before His throne.”*
- *“He shall return in robes of white. The blazing Son shall pierce the night. And I will rise among the saints. My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face!”*

**H.C. # 52** - How does Christ's return “to judge the living & the dead” comfort you?

What does all of this have to do with the books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians?

Paul is writing to the Thessalonians to comfort them in the midst of affliction!

Paul was with them for a month, but was run out of town! He went on to Berea & the same mob came & ran him out of there as well!

Paul feared that the seeds of the gospel that he planted in Thessalonica may have dried up due to persecution, and he wasn't there to be able to provide what was necessary to grow & disciple them!

But Paul hears of great transformation taking place in that city, & he is overjoyed! He also wants to encourage them to keep persevering! But how?

What could Paul share with them in these letters, with absolute certainty...

- *“Thessalonians, I am coming to you & I will help you in your affliction!”*
- *“Your persecution is only temporary; relief is just around the corner!”*
- *“Look at the bright side, it can only get better from here!”*

The only comfort/hope Paul could definitely give to the Thessalonians is the hope of Jesus' return when all will be made right by Him at His coming!

This is the primary message Paul gives in both letters! So much so that in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians, Paul ends every chapter with this certain hope of Christ's return – 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23.

But it's more than just a hope that waits for a future day to come! It is a hope that leads to a way of life that is fueled by that coming reality!

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-24** – Underline all the ways we are called to live, out of the hope we have in Jesus' return!

There is a very bright future for God's people in glory! But don't just wait for that day & do nothing until it comes! Live each day with that future in mind!

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