

Whether Watchful or Lethargic, We Will Live w/ Him: 1 Thess 5:1–11

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INTRODUCTION

Author of 1 Thessalonians: Paul

Recipients of 1 Thessalonians: A new church in Thessalonica comprised of new believers

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica: Acts 17:1–10: November 50–January 51 (cf. earlier messages)

Dates of First and Second Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians: Early summer 51 (only about 8 months since Paul arrived in Thessalonica)
2 Thessalonians: Summer 51

Occasion of First Thessalonians:

After Paul left Thessalonica, the church came under strong persecution. Opponents charged that Paul had fleeced & abandoned them. Furthermore, some within the congregation died. They feared that the tribulation had begun and about whether they would be reunited with deceased believers.

Thematic Statement: 1:9–10

<i>How you turned to God from idols</i>	(2:1–3:13)	The relationship between Paul & them
<i>to serve the living and true God</i>	(4:1–12)	Continue serving the Lord
<i>and to wait for His Son from heaven</i>	(4:13–5:11)	Expect the pre-trib rapture

Review

(1:2–10) Paul prays thankfully because they apply the word in love, await the Lord's deliverance & are elect; specifically, his message had power & assurance by the Holy Spirit, which they perceived in Paul's demeanor among them; so they followed Paul & God, after receiving that message in affliction, so they became examples to believers in Greece & elsewhere, so others speak of their faith: specifically, of Paul's entrance to the Thessalonians who now serve God & patiently await the rapture

(2:1–12) Paul's entry to Thess was productive, despite sufferings because, God entrusted Him to share truth, so Paul pleases God (bels' judge); he did not flatter (for gain) nor seek \$ befitting an apostle, but was gentle as a nursing mother w/ own infant, seeking to impart word & his very life, because he loves them, evidenced by his laboring to avoid burdening them; they know his integrity among them as a father directing his own children to live worth of God who calls them to the kingdom

(2:13–16) Paul thanks God that they welcomed His word, in which they were like Judean churches in facing persecution by their countrymen who opposed God & people, killing & hindering those God sent

(2:17–20) Paul tried to return to Thess, but anticipates being w/ them in kingdom, because he loves them

(3:1–13) After leaving Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy to establish and encourage them, so their afflictions (to which—as Paul had said—bels are appointed) would not deter them (that Satan had not caused defection that would nullify Paul's sufferings & labor that they be rewardable); Timothy returned to Paul with good news which encouraged Paul, who rejoices that they stand firm and who prays that he may come to edify them and also prays that their mutual love increase, so the Lord will establish them in preparation to returning with Him at second advent

(4:1–12) [Based upon their initial response to Paul coming & their progress, he urges them to abound still more in obedience; [specifically], they are to abound still more obeying God's will (to be [sexually] holy) by abstaining from sexual immorality; [specifically,] bels are to gain (sexual) control of their own bodies in sanctification and honor, rather than being controlled by passionate lust as w/ Gunbels; lest we defraud brethren in this, because God (who called us to holiness, not to uncleanness) disciplines, as He warns; this, rejecting this isn't merely rejecting man's word, but the word of God who gave us the HS Paul does not need to inform them of the command to love one another, because they are already God-taught to love the brethren & their love abounds for Macedonian bels, but it should abound still more, that they aspire for a quiet life, being occupied with their own business & in productive work, as Paul commands, that they would conduct themselves properly toward unbelievers & would not lack

(4:13–18) We should know about bels who sleep (die) lest we grieve (hopelessly) as unbels who lack expectancy; belief that JC rose certifies that God will (w/ Christ) raise dead bels; that is, bels who remain on earth [at rapture] will not precede dead bels; that is, JC will descend audibly; dead bels will rise 1st, then bels who remain will be caught up w/ JC in clouds to meet JC in air, so we will be w/ JC always; so rapture should comfort bels

BACKGROUND:

Thematic Statement: 1:9–10

<i>How you turned to God from idols</i>	(2:1–3:13)	The relationship between Paul & them
<i>to serve the living and true God</i>	(4:1–12)	Continue serving the Lord
<i>and to wait for His Son from heaven</i>	(4:13–5:11)	Expect the pre-trib rapture

This is in the third section of the body of the book

4:13–5:11 = section 3, which has two subpoints

Section 3A is 4:13–18

Section 3B is 5:1–11

Why is this important?

Those who reject the pre-tribulation rapture often say that 5:1 begins with *de* (*but*) a minor conjunction. They then claim that 4:13–5:11 talks about one topic only.

It is true that 5:1 begins with *de*. It is true that *de* can be a minor conjunction. However, it is not true that 5:1 only begins with *de*. It starts with (*peri de*), as in 4:9 and 4:13

Look at 4:9: *But concerning (peri de) brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you.*

Do they need for Paul to write *concerning* brotherly love? No

This is the first topic

Look at 4:13: *But (de) I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning (peri) those who have fallen asleep. . . .*

Do they need Paul to write *concerning* those who have fallen asleep? Yes

This is the second topic

Look at 5:1: *But concerning (peri de) the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.*

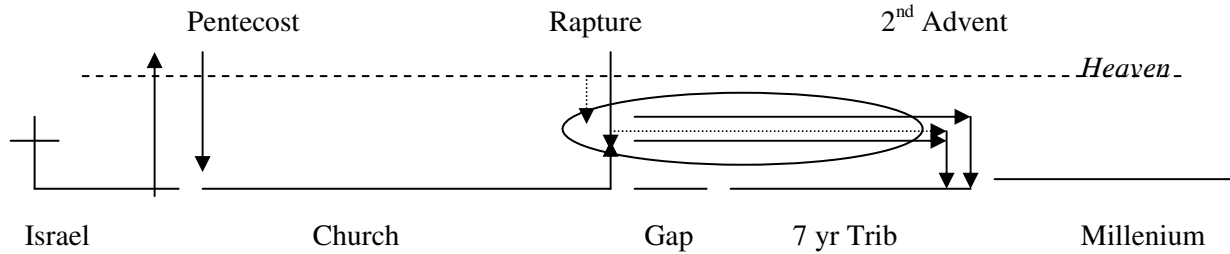
Do they need for Paul to write *concerning* times and seasons? No

This is the third topic

Thus, although 4:13–5:11 talks about the future, there are two topics. 4:13–18 speaks concerning the rapture. 5:1–11 speaks concerning the times & seasons (specifically the day of the Lord)

Second topic is like Get out of jail free; third is like Go to jail. With the Get out of jail free, you go to just visiting, instead.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE



Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven. Ten days later (Pentecost), the Holy Spirit descended and the Church Age began. At the Rapture, all Church Age believers (alive or dead) will be taken up to meet Jesus, who descends to the clouds. We (and He) remain in the clouds through a gap of unspecified length and through the seven-year Tribulation unto the Second Advent when we will accompany Christ as He comes to earth. He will conquer His enemies and will soon establish His 1000 year Millennial Kingdom.

The dotted horizontal line represents heaven. Notice that the Church meets Christ in the clouds (below heaven). We stay there until it is time to come to earth (at least seven years later). (The Church comes in two parts. Those alive come up from earth. Those who sleep come from the presence of the Lord.

Why a gap? The Rapture marks the end of the Church on earth, but the Tribulation does not begin immediately. The Tribulation begins when Israel signs the peace treaty with the Roman government. Scripture does not specify how long the gap will be.

NEW EXPOSITION

(5:1–3) They had no need for teaching on the times & seasons, because they already knew that the Day of the Lord will come without warning: that is, inescapable destruction will come suddenly (as labor pains on an expectant mother) when people are saying *Peace & safety!*

The phrase: Times and seasons

Acts 1

Acts 3

The phrase: Day of the Lord

Isaiah 2:12

Amos 5:18, 20

Zephaniah 1:7, 14

The phrase: Birth pangs [ōdin]

Matthew 24:8 *the beginning of sorrows [ōdin]*

Cf. 2 Peter 3:3–10

Note how this clarifies *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come* (1:10) as the rapture

(1:9b) <i>How you turned to God from idols</i>	(2:1–3:13)	Relation between Paul & them
(1:9c) <i>to serve the living and true God</i>	(4:1–12)	Continue serving the Lord
(1:10) <i>and to wait for His Son from heaven</i>	(4:13–5:11)	Expect the pre-trib rapture

1 Thes 1:9–10 is the thematic statement for the book. Believers are to expect the Lord to deliver us via the pre-trib rapture. We will not enter the Tribulation.

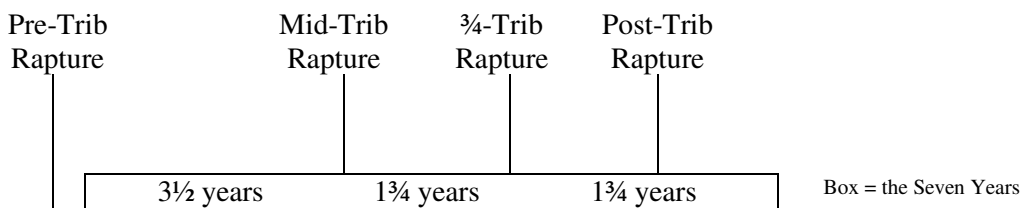
(Recap of 5:1–3) They had no need for teaching on the times & seasons, because they already knew that the Day of the Lord will come without warning: that is, inescapable destruction will come suddenly (as labor pains on an expectant mother) when people are saying *Peace & safety!*
 But concerning (*peri de*) tells us that this is a new topic, not a continuation of 4:13–18

The destruction will be sudden and inescapable (for those who are on earth at the time)

1 Thes 1:10 says that they await the Lord Jesus to deliver them from that coming wrath

Question: Will Jesus wait until the coming wrath starts (before delivering believers)? No.

Thus, advocates of mid-trib, $\frac{3}{4}$ -trib, post-trib, & pre-trib rapture views all claim that the rapture happens before wrath starts. However, the first three views are wrong about when wrath starts.



Wrath starts acc. to Pre-trib (Rapture is before 7 years of wrath starts)

Wrath starts acc. to mid-trib (rapture is before 3½ years of wrath)

Wrath starts acc. to $\frac{3}{4}$ -trib (rapture is before 1¾ yrs)

Wrath starts acc. to Post-trib (late rap)

If wrath characterizes the whole seven years, then only one view could actually view the timing of the rapture correctly—as a pre-trib deliverance before the seven years of wrath starts.

(I will take a Wednesday after we finish 1 Thess to treat several issues in more detail).

(5:4–5) The Thessalonian believers are not in darkness, so the Day of the Lord cannot overtake them as a thief (in the night), because they are sons of light and sons of the day & neither they nor Paul are of the night nor of the darkness.

Question: In the verse, does the thief come in the day? Or does he come at night?

Unbelievers who are on earth right now (daytime) may remain on earth during darkness.

They will not be raptured before darkness starts, so darkness will overtake them.

Believers who are on earth right now will not remain on earth during darkness.

They will be raptured before darkness starts, so darkness will not overtake them.

(5:6–8) Believers must not be lethargic (as unbelievers are), but need to be alert and sober, because lethargy and drunkenness are activities of the night, not of daylight; so bels (who are of the day) should remain sober by putting on faith, love, & the expectation of the pre-trib rapture

The word for sleep here is *katheudō*, not *koimaomai*. The word *koimaomai* often refers to death as *sleep* (as in 1 Thes 4:14–16). However, *katheudō* never stands for death in the NT. It often refers to spiritual lethargy. Cf. Matthew 26:40, 43, 45; Eph 5:13.

Katheudō is used of spiritual lethargy in 1 Thess 5:6, 7, 10.

Spiritual alertness comes through believing God’s word, showing love for each other (cf. 4:1–12), and by expecting the Lord’s pre-trib deliverance (the truth which comforts).

(5:9–10) The reason for being spiritually alert is because God did not appoint us for wrath (the Day of the Lord), but for obtaining (pre-trib) deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that we should live together with Him (whether we are alert or lethargic)

(5:11) We should comfort & edify one another (with these words) as the Thessalonians did

CONCLUSION

5:11 tells us that we should have comfort in knowing that all believers, even those who are lethargic, will be raptured. The certainty of the rapture should motivate us to live as children of the day, which is who we are. We should comfort and edify each other with this truth.

Paul does not here talk about reward, but hinted at it in 1 Thess 1:12. His argument here is that God is faithful to His promise, even to lethargic believers, but how much better is will be for believers (who are children of light) to live in keeping with who they are.

Summary of 4:13–18 and 5:1–11

	<i>Living Believers (per 4:13–18)</i>	<i>Dead Believers (per 4:13–18)</i>
<i>Alert Believers (per 5:1–11)</i>	Will be raptured (w/ reward)	Will be raptured (w/ reward)
<i>Lethargic Believers (per 5:1–11)</i>	Will be raptured (w/o reward)	Will be raptured (w/o reward)

Unbelievers will not be raptured. They have no hope (4:13); they shall not escape (5:3).

This is the deliverance for which we await (1 Thess 1:10)