

Key to I Thessalonians

1. BACKGROUND:

Writer is Paul. Time of writing about A.D. 52. Place of writing, Corinth during Paul's first visit there (Acts 18).

Thessalonica (present-day Saloniki) was a large and important city of Macedonia on the main Roman highway. Evidently, there was a large colony of Jews there, and Paul had founded a church there as he traveled from Philippi (Acts 17:1-9). Soon after the church was established, Paul had to leave. But he was anxious about the church's welfare and finally sent Timothy to learn if all was well (I Thessalonians 3:1-5). Timothy returned with news of the church's condition and this letter is the result (Acts 18:5).

2. THEME:

The outstanding subject is the return of CHRIST. Because Paul's ministry in Thessalonica had been somewhat brief, there was necessity to confirm the young believers in the truths Paul had already given them. Coupled with this is an exhortation to holiness of life, encouragement in spite of persecution (3:2-4), and comfort to those who had lost loved ones in death (4:13-18).

3. MAIN DIVISIONS:

Three tenses of the Christian life (1); rewards to the model servant (2); the believer's sanctification (3); the believer's hope (4); the coming day of the Lord (5).

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Each chapter ends with a special message as to the LORD's return.

This letter (and II Thessalonians) are the earliest of Paul's writings.

Paul's success in Thessalonica was remarkable. Among his converts were Demas (II Timothy 4:10), Gaius (Acts 19:29), Secundus (20:4), Aristarchus (27:2; Colossians 4:10).

We are not sure if Paul ministered in Thessalonica only about a month (Acts 17:2) or if he ministered further in the house of Jason (v. 5). At any rate, the teaching during that time included such doctrines as: election, HOLY SPIRIT, assurance, Trinity, conversion, second coming of CHRIST, believer's walk, sanctification, day of the LORD, resurrection, threefold nature of man.

The Christians at Thessalonica evidently had formed a strong affection and attachment for their Teacher as evidenced by 3:6-10.

Paul's work in Thessalonica was remarkable for his enemies accused him of having "**turned the world upside down**" (Acts 17:6). This work was heralded all over Greece (I Thessalonians 1:8,9).

5. OUTLINE:

Introduction (1) Persecution
Reminiscences (2; 3) Timothy
Preaching Consolation

Exhortation (4:1-12) Charity
Purity

Exposition (4:13-5:3)
Advent of CHRIST
Uncertainty of Time

Application (5:4-22)
Comfort
Conduct
Conclusion (5:23-28)

6. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

The true motion of the Christian life (1:9) is turning to GOD, from idols. Not, from idols to GOD.

The influence of just one church is stated in 1:8 how that the Church of the Thessalonians had a world-wide reputation for faith.

The necessity of sexual purity is stressed in 4:1-5 in the midst of a civilization that was loose-living in the extreme.

Central passage on the rapture of the church is found in 4:13-18 where Paul reveals the glorious details of the coming of CHRIST for His own. These are words divinely given for comfort.

Teaching on the high regard for faithful ministers stems from 5:12, 13.

Brief sevenfold admonition for Christian living given in 5:16-22.

7. KEY:

I Thessalonians will be best understood as teaching Christian living from the standpoint of the nearness of the LORD's return. We should live as if CHRIST died yesterday, arose this morning, and was returning tomorrow.

~ end of I Thessalonians ~

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