

Date: Oct. 20th, 2009

Reading: I Thessalonians



Have you ever had something stolen? I have, but I have no idea when it was stolen. One day I am looking for something that I know should be in a particular spot but it is not there and is no where to be found. A thief tries not to attract attention but creeps in and steals your possessions without you even realizing it. Paul told the Thessalonians that the “day of the Lord” would come just like a thief in the night. He then tells them they are of the day and not of the night and therefore should always be ready. “The day of the Lord” refers to the day of judgment when Jesus will return for His children and judge the world. Are we like the Thessalonians and people of the day, ready for Jesus’s return. See how Paul describes the Thessalonians and ask ourselves if he could have described us that way.

God bless the readers.

David Williams

Date: April 2, 2010
Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1-3

The two letters to the Thessalonians were written to a very young church. Paul's first visit to the city of Thessalonica is described in Acts 17 and may not have lasted a whole month! He taught in the synagogue of the Jews, converting some Jews and a large number of devout Gentiles ("God-fearers"), but the unconverted Jews stirred up persecution against the apostle and his companions, causing them to flee from the city.

From Thessalonica, Paul, Timothy and Silas traveled to Berea and from there Paul went to Athens, leaving his companions behind (Acts 17:14-15). Apparently Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16) and were sent back to Macedonia to visit churches there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). Timothy went back to Thessalonica to "establish" and "encourage" the new Christians there. Meanwhile Paul left Athens and journeyed to Corinth where he was eventually joined by both Timothy and Silas (Acts 18:5). Timothy brought a good report of the Thessalonian congregation, bringing joy to the apostle (3:6-10).

It is evident from chapter 3 that Paul would have liked to have spent more time with the Thessalonians to help them be firmly grounded and prepared for the "afflictions" they faced (vs. 2; see 2:14-18). Note his benediction at the conclusion of chapter 3 (vs. 11-13).

Despite (because of?) the short time that they had been Christians, the Thessalonians were very zealous in spreading the word of the Lord throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1:6-8). It may be that there were some among the unconverted Jews who were questioning the authority and/or integrity of Paul and so he reminded the Thessalonians of the manner in which he and his companions preached the gospel among them (2:1-12). They were not "slick salesmen" who used the preaching of the gospel as an opportunity to take advantage of the Thessalonians in some way (2:3-6).

He also reminded the Thessalonians of the manner in which they had received his preaching. They had recognized the message which Paul preached, although delivered by human tongue, to be the very word of God (2:13).

Do we approach our study of the Scriptures in this way, i.e., as an opportunity to hear the very words of God to us? Paul wrote that the word of God "effectively works in [those] who believe" (2:13b). Allow the divine message to have its power in your life today!

God bless the reader,
Allen

Date: April 3, 2010
Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4-5

We have good reason to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The manner of His death is recorded in the gospels and the apostles gave their eyewitness testimony regarding the risen Jesus (e.g., Acts 2:32).

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote that their confidence in the final resurrection was based on their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (4:14). It appears that some of the Thessalonians were concerned about the future of Christians who died (“have fallen asleep” – 4:13) before the coming of Christ. Paul didn’t want them to sorrow as those who had no hope.



“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (4:14).

Paul gave a vivid description of the coming of the Lord. The descent of the Lord from heaven would be accompanied with a cry of command (so ESV, NIV, NLT, NRS), with the shout of the archangel (Michael – Jude 1:9) and with the trumpet of God (vs. 16).

Jesus said, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear

His voice and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). At the sound of the voice of Jesus, graves will be emptied. Those Christians who have already died will be raised (1 Thessalonians 4:16b).

The apostle Paul wrote that living Christians will then join those saints who had been raised from the dead, caught up together “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (vs. 17). The epitaph “Gone to be with Jesus” is often put on cemetery headstones, but the bodies of the saints will be raised and the epitaph (in some cases) will literally be true.

Paul went on to write to the Thessalonians that the “day of the Lord” would come as a thief in the night, i.e., unexpectedly (5:2-3). He encouraged his fellow saints to “watch and be sober” (5:4-8). They needed to be ready

We too need to “watch and be sober.” Nearly 2,000 years have passed since Paul penned the words of the Lord (4:15a) to the Thessalonians, but each day of our lives carries with it the potential to be “the day” – the day when we hear the trumpet of God and turn our eyes to see the Lord descending from heaven.

Paul wrote that we need to be watchful and sober because “God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9). When Jesus returns “in the clouds” (Acts 1:9-11), will we be ready? What will await us...wrath or eternal life?

God bless the “watchful” reader,
Allen