

A stylized mountain graphic in a light blue color. The mountain's silhouette is filled with the words 'ENCOURAGEMENT' and 'HOPE' in a bold, blocky, sans-serif font. The word 'ENCOURAGEMENT' is on the top line, and 'HOPE' is on the bottom line. The letters are white with a dark blue outline, making them stand out against the light blue background of the mountain.

ENCOURAGEMENT HOPE

A study from the books of Thessalonians

New Testament Book of 1 Thessalonians





The city was founded around 315 BC by King Cassander of Macedon, near the ancient town of Therma. He named it after his wife Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great and princess of Macedonia as daughter of Philip II. Under the kingdom of Macedonia, the city retained its own autonomy and parliament and evolved to become the most important city in Macedonia.

- After the fall of the Kingdom of Macedonia in 168 BC, in 148 BC Thessalonica was made the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Thessalonica became a free city of the Roman Republic under Mark Antony in 41 BC. It grew to be an important trade hub located on the Via Egnatia, the road connecting Dyrrhachium with Byzantium, which facilitated trade between Thessaloniki and great centers of commerce such as Rome and Byzantium.
- Thessaloniki lays at the southern end of the main north–south route through the Balkans along the valleys of the Morava and Axios river valleys, thereby linking the Balkans with the rest of Greece. The city became the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia.
- At the time of the Roman Empire, about 50 AD, Thessaloniki was also one of the early centers of Christianity; while on his second missionary journey, Paul the Apostle visited this city's chief synagogue and sowed the seeds for Thessaloniki's first Christian church.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1

1 and 2 Thessalonians, written about 50 AD, are the earliest documents in the New Testament.

- www.jesuswalk.com/books/thessalonians.htm

1 Thessalonians was written within a matter of a few months or so from the time when the readers had first heard the gospel, and it should be read as a follow-up letter to new converts.

– New Bible Commentary



Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1 Thessalonians 1:1



Who was Paul?

- Saul was likely born a few years after Jesus. “Paul” was his Roman name, “Saul” was his Hebrew name.
- He was a native of Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a Roman province in southeast Asia Minor. That city stood on the banks of the river Cydnus and became a center of extensive commercial traffic with many countries along the Mediterranean and central Asia Minor. It became a city distinguished for the wealth of its inhabitants. Tarsus had a famous university and Saul likely enjoyed the best education his native city could afford. His father was of the strictest sect of the Jews, a Pharisee, of the tribe of Benjamin, of pure Jewish blood (Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:5).
- We read of his sister and his sister’s son (Acts 23:16), and of other relatives (Rom. 16:7, 11, 12). His father was a Roman citizen. How he obtained this privilege we are not informed. It might be bought, or won by distinguished service to the state, or acquired in several other ways; at all events, his son was freeborn. It was a valuable privilege, and one that was to prove of great use to Paul.
- He learned the trade of making tents from goats’ hair cloth, a trade common in Tarsus (Acts 18:3).
- Saul was sent at about thirteen years of age to the great Jewish school of sacred learning at Jerusalem. He became a pupil of the celebrated rabbi Gamaliel, and spent many years in an elaborate study of the Old Testament Scriptures.



Who was Paul?

- Prior to his conversion, Paul was a persecutor of Christians. Acts reports that he 'laid waste the church' and 'dragged off men and women and committed them to prison' (8:3). He 'persecuted them even to foreign cities' (26:11), receiving authority from the high priest to extradite Christians from Damascus (9:1–2; 22:5). 'I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it' (Gal. 1:13; see Gal. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:9).
- Paul's conversion involved the revelation of Jesus as God's Son and the commission to preach to the Gentiles. In Acts, the conversion of Paul is recounted three times (9:1–19; 22:3–16; 26:4–18) and include supernatural details: light and voices from heaven, Paul's blindness and recovery. They also observe that Paul's conversion was facilitated by a religious leader named Ananias (9:10–18; 22:12–16) and that Paul was baptized (9:18; 22:16). The risen Christ had appeared to him (1 Cor. 15:8). This vision led to the conviction that the crucified Jesus was the Messiah.
- Immediately after his conversion he retired into the solitudes of Arabia (Gal. 1:17) for devout study and meditation. Coming back, after three years, to Damascus, he began to preach the gospel "boldly in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27), but soon fled to Jerusalem (9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33). After three weeks, he was again forced to flee (Acts 9:28, 29) from persecution. He returned to his native Tarsus (Gal. 1:21).
- More than one-fourth of the writings of the New Testament are attributed to him. Paul's use of Greek confirms his origin as a Hellenistic Jew of the Dispersion, at home in the Greco-Roman world.
- Most likely, Paul was executed at the end of his original Roman imprisonment, probably in 62 AD.

Sources: Easton's Bible Dictionary and Harper's Bible Dictionary



Who was Timothy?

- A young disciple and Paul's companion on many journeys. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, are mentioned for their piety (2 Tim. 1:5). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). He is first seen on Paul's second visit to Lystra (16:2), where he probably resided, and where it seems he was converted during Paul's first visit there (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:11).
- The apostle formed a high opinion of his "own son in the faith," arranged that he should become his companion (Acts 16:3), and circumcised him so that he might conciliate the Jews. He was called an evangelist (1 Tim. 4:14), and went with Paul in his journey through Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, Troas, Philippi and Berea (Acts 17:14). He followed Paul to Athens, and was sent by him with Silas on a mission to Thessalonica (17:15; 1 Thess. 3:2). We next find him at Corinth (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) with Paul. He passes out of sight for a few years, and is again with the apostle at Ephesus (Acts 19:22), whence he is sent on a mission into Macedonia.
- He accompanied Paul afterwards into Asia (20:4), where he was with him for some time. When the apostle was a prisoner at Rome, Timothy joined him (Phil. 1:1), where it appears he also suffered imprisonment (Heb. 13:23). During the apostle's second imprisonment he wrote to Timothy, asking him to rejoin him as soon as possible, and to bring with him certain things which he had left at Troas, his cloak and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13).

Who was Silvanus?

- We first see Silvanus or Silas (probably a contraction of Silvanus) as one of the "leading men among the brothers" in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22). He is selected to carry a letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile churches. The letter conveys the amazing revelation that the Gentiles need not become Jews to be true Christians. They are only required to observe certain dietary customs to avoid offending their Jewish Christian brothers and sisters -- and to avoid sexual immorality, which was rampant among non-Jews.
- Later, Paul selects Silas to accompany him on his Second Missionary Journey, after Paul and Barnabas part company (Acts 15:36-41). Silas travels with Paul through Syria and the provinces of Cilicia, Galatia, and Asia. They are successful in the Macedonian city of Philippi but meet stiff opposition. Paul and Silas were stripped, flogged, and thrown in jail. But the Scripture records: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:25) They are freed by an earthquake.
- The next city they come to was Thessalonica. Silas is also mentioned as Paul's co-worker in Berea (Acts 17:14) and in Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:19).
- Probably it is this same Silas who serves as an amanuensis or secretary for the early church's other premier apostle, Simon Peter (1 Peter 5:12).



We [Paul, Silvanus and Timothy] give
thanks to God always for all of you
[followers of Jesus in Thessalonica],
making mention of you in our prayers;
1 Thessalonians 1:2



**What does Paul know about the
church in Thessalonica?**

Acts 17



Now when they [Paul and Silas] had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue [assembly] of the Jews. Acts 17:1





The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was about 100 miles with Amphipolis and Apollonia at approximately 30-mile intervals on the **Via Egnatia**. Evidently there were no Jewish synagogues in the two towns where Paul did not stop.

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them [gave them a sermon] from the [Old Testament] Scriptures, Acts 17:2

The reference to three Sabbath days does not mean the missionary band stayed only three weeks in Thessalonica. Paul carried on the work with a Jewish emphasis for three Sabbaths and then turned to Gentiles and ministered to them for some weeks after that. This was the situation for three reasons: (1) The Philippian church sent money to Paul at least twice during this visit (Phil. 4:15–16), implying a longer lapse of time than three weeks. (2) Paul supported himself by manual labor (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7–10). This may indicate that considerable time elapsed before the aid from Philippi arrived. (3) Most of the converts at Thessalonica were not from the synagogue but were Gentiles steeped in idolatry (1 Thess. 1:9).

- Bible Knowledge Commentary



The fact that the Tanakh (Old Testament) is cited some 695 times in the New Testament shows that its writers were convinced that although God had done something unique and radically new in Yeshua, the meaning of what he had done could be adequately expressed only in relation to the Tanakh. This conviction set the first believers to reading the Tanakh with new eyes, which led to understanding how it relates to New Testament truth. For some purposes it was sufficient to refer generally to “the Scriptures” or “the Tanakh” (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–4); but frequently major events in the life of Yeshua were related to individual texts.

TORAH TUESDAY

STUDY THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION
WITH PASTOR TREY GRAHAM

EVERY TUESDAY MORNING
7:00 AM

Study of
Genesis, called
Bereshit in
Hebrew,
begins this
Tuesday,
October 18



explaining and giving evidence that the Christ [Messiah] had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ [Messiah].” Acts 17:3

“The Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead.” Paul had to show this from the Tanakh, from Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and Psalm 16:8–11 (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–4), because the Jewish people were expecting that the first and most important act of the Messiah would be political liberation. The first task was to re-order Jewish expectations. The second was to show that these new expectations are fulfilled in Yeshua.

And some of them [Jews] were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas [both Jews], along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

Acts 17:4

*Paul and Silas' ministry in presenting the crucified and resurrected Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah) met with response: some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks (see Acts 16:14, where the same Greek word is used of Lydia, who is called "a worshiper of God"; the same word in Acts 17:17), and not a few prominent women (v. 12). The gospel message was received by people of various nationalities and social positions.

- Bible Knowledge Commentary



But the [unbelieving] Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them [Paul and Silas] out to the people. Acts 17:5



When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” Acts 17:6-7

“They assert that there is another king, Yeshua.” Compare Acts 16:20–23, also the accusations made against Yeshua at His own trial (John 18:33–38, 19:12) and His responses. He is King. He will rule the world. However, at present His rulership is not in this world (John 18:36), so Paul taught believers to obey temporal laws (Romans 13:1–7) and Peter wrote, “Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). In the light of the emissaries’ own teaching, the accusation against Paul and his companions is false.

They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge [bond] from Jason and the others, they released them. Acts 17:8-9

The crowd and the politarchs were in turmoil (Greek *etaraxan*, “agitated, disturbed, troubled”; John 11:33; Acts 16:20) probably because they could not find Paul and Silas, the source of the city’s problem. Probably the bond-posting was to guarantee that Paul and Silas would leave town and not return. If more trouble arose, Jason and the others would lose their money. This may explain why Paul was prohibited from returning (1 Thess. 2:18). In spite of this, the Christians at Thessalonica kept on boldly proclaiming the gospel (1 Thess. 1:7–10; 2:14–16). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



Who was Jason?

A famous Greek name often utilized as a family name by Hellenistic (i.e., Greek-speaking) Jews for such Hebrew names as Joshua or Jeshua. According to Acts 17:5–9, Paul's host while the latter was establishing a Christian community in Thessalonica. The Jews assaulted his house in order to seize Paul, but failing to find him, they dragged Jason before the ruler of the city. After a riot occasioned by Paul's missionary work, Jason was required, as part of his role as patron, to accept legal responsibility for the future activity of Paul. It may be the same Jason who sends greetings in Romans 16:21. He was apparently one of the kinsmen of Paul, and accompanied him from Thessalonica to Corinth.



The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the [Old Testament] Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:10-11



Berea was about 46 miles southwest of Thessalonica on the eastern slopes of a mountain.



Therefore many of them [Jews in Berea] believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. But when the [unbelieving] Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there [in Berea]. Acts 17:12-14





Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.
Acts 17:15

*According to 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2, Silas and Timothy joined Paul at Athens. Silas was commissioned by Paul to leave Athens and meet him at Corinth (Acts 18:1–5).

- Bible Knowledge Commentary





Paul goes first to Athens, then to Corinth, where he enjoys a successful 18-month ministry. During this time, Timothy visits Thessalonica and reports back to Paul good news about the church as well as its problems.

1 Thessalonians was probably written from Corinth in 50 AD, and 2 Thessalonians a few months later.

1 Thessalonians is written shortly after receiving a report from Timothy after a recent visit.

2 Thessalonians may have been prompted by a letter from the church.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1



Paul and Silvanus [Silas] and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 1 Thessalonians 1:1

*Letters written in first-century Greco-Roman culture began with three statements which are found in the opening verse of 1 Thessalonians: the name(s) of the writer(s), the name(s) of the addressee(s), and a word of formal greeting.

We give thanks [Greek verb εὐχαριστέω *eucharisteo*] to God always for all of you [followers of Jesus in Thessalonica], making mention of you in our prayers;
1 Thessalonians 1:2

*Rather than being a source of grief these Christians evoked gratitude. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness [endurance] of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 1 Thessalonians 1:3

The Thessalonians had exercised saving faith in Christ in the past when they had believed the gospel, they were loving Christ in the present, and they were hoping for His return in the future. Their lives were certainly focused on Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul and his companions gave thanks for them.

- Bible Knowledge Commentary



Three characteristics of these believers stood out in Paul's mind...

1. They performed an important work produced by (lit., “of”) **faith** in Christ. Verse 9 mentions that they had turned to the true God from idols. Faith in Christ had produced true repentance.
2. They performed **labor** (*kopou*, “toil”) prompted by love for Christ. This consisted in their serving the living and true God (v. 9) in the midst of persecution (v. 6).
3. They had **endurance** (*hypomonēs*, lit., “a bearing up patiently under a heavy load”; cf. 2 Thess. 1:4) inspired by hope in Christ. Specifically they were waiting for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10).

knowing, brethren [brothers] beloved by God, His choice of you; 1 Thessalonians 1:4

- “brothers” - Paul used this term (Greek *adelphoi*) 15 times in 1 Thessalonians (1:4; 2:1, 9, 17; 3:7; 4:1, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 25–27), and 7 times in 2 Thessalonians (1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13).
- Paul did not claim superiority over them but recognized the equality of all the redeemed in the sight of their heavenly Father, as he taught elsewhere (1 Cor. 12:14–27) and as the Lord taught (Matt. 23:9). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



The proof of God's love for the Thessalonians was His choice of them unto salvation. From the Greek word translated "chosen" (*eklogēn*) comes the English "election." That God has chosen to bless some individuals with eternal life is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 4:37; 7:6–7; Isa. 44:1–2; Rom. 9; Eph. 1:4–6, 11; Col. 3:12; 2 Thess. 2:13). Equally clear is the fact that God holds each individual responsible for his decision to trust or not to trust in Jesus Christ (John 3; Rom. 5). The difficulty in putting divine election and human responsibility together is understanding how both can be true. That both are true is taught in the Bible. How both can be true is apparently incomprehensible to finite human minds; no one has ever been able to explain this antinomy satisfactorily.

– Bible Knowledge Commentary



for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 1 Thessalonians 1:5

- The response of his converts was a supernatural work of God, not a natural response to a sermon. When Paul preached to them, he did not share human opinion and philosophy (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1–5). His message was marked by the power of God (cf. Rom. 1:16). The Holy Spirit brought it to their hearts with deep conviction (John 16:8). Paul’s message was marked by his own certainty that this message would change their lives as it had radically changed his.
- Not only did Paul and his traveling companions preach a convincing message, but they also lived lives consistent with that message when they were in Thessalonica. The Thessalonians were fully aware of their teachers’ manner of life and that their motive was to benefit the Thessalonians. The message Paul preached—the gospel of the grace of God—had entered into the minds and hearts of these Macedonians and they had been saved. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the **joy** of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7

- The outstanding fruit of faith in the gospel was the Thessalonians' change of behavior. They became imitators of their spiritual parents but went on to imitate the Lord. The Gentile converts must have had to swim against the swift current of paganism that flowed through commercial Thessalonica. And the city's chief men's wives, who had become Christians, had to go home to unbelieving husbands who would not have appreciated their newly sensitized consciences. In spite of trials without, the Thessalonian believers possessed joy within, the joy of sins forgiven. The source of their joy was the indwelling Holy Spirit. – Bible Knowledge Commentary



For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 1 Thessalonians 1:8

- When the Thessalonians received the gospel they passed it on to others. The word *exēchētai*, translated “rang out” or “sounded forth”, could be rendered “reverberated.” Paul saw the Thessalonians as amplifiers or relay stations that not only received the gospel message but sent it farther on its way with increased power and scope.
- Apparently it was not through an organized evangelistic campaign that their witness went forth. It was through the personal lives and testimonies of these transformed individuals that neighbors heard about their faith in God. As they went the gospel was heard everywhere, so an apostolic missionary campaign was not needed.



For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in **every place your faith toward God has gone forth**, so that we have no need to say anything.

1 Thessalonians 1:8



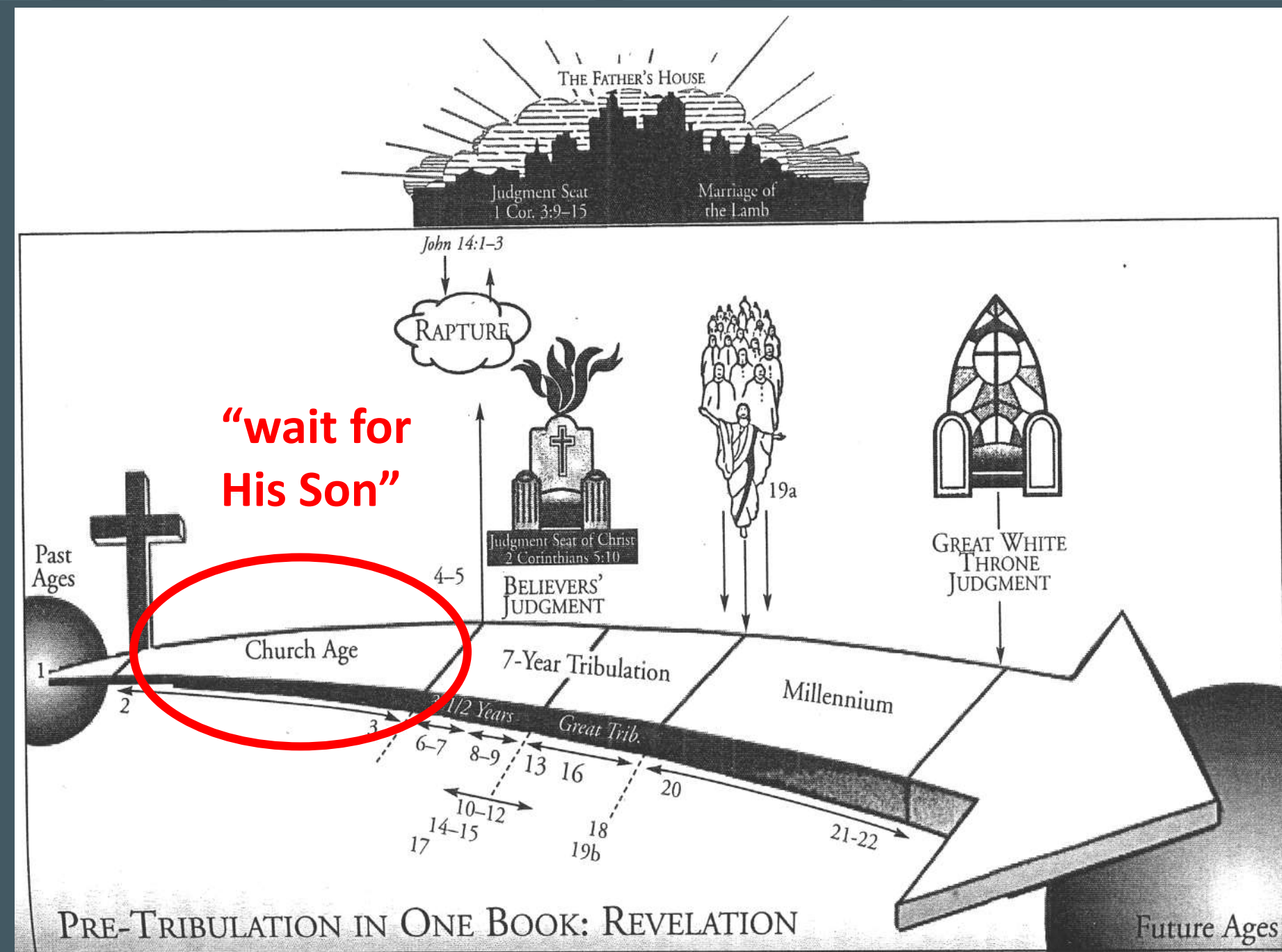
For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we [Paul, Silas, Timothy] had with you [believers in Thessalonica], and how you turned to God from [pagan] idols to serve a living and true God, and to **wait** for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

- Paul gives the proper perspective on Yeshua; He is God's Son, as the Tanakh (Old Testament) indicates (Isaiah 9:6, Psalm 2:7, Proverbs 30:4, Daniel 7:13), whom He raised from the dead, and who will, at His Second Coming, appear from heaven, where He is now "seated at the right hand of God" (Psalm 110:1).

We presently live in the **Church Age**, a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks (sevens) of Daniel's vision in Daniel 9.

The 70th and final week (7 years) will begin with the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation begins after the Church of Jesus Christ exits the earth at the Rapture.



and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10

- The return of Jesus is a source of hope for Christians for several reasons, but the reason which Paul mentioned here was Jesus' deliverance of the saints from the coming wrath of God. The wrath of God will be poured out on unrighteous people because of their failure to trust in Christ (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18). This happens at many times and in many ways, the great white throne judgment being the most awful occasion (Rev. 20:11–15). The “time of trouble for Jacob” (Jer. 30:4–7), also called “the Great Tribulation” (Rev. 7:14), will be a period in history during which God's wrath will be poured out on the earth as never before (Rev. 6–19).
- This chapter, like every chapter in this epistle, closes with a reference to the return of Jesus (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18, 5:23). - Bible Knowledge Commentary



Next week...

1 Thessalonians chapter 2



Lessons for Us... 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

- There is one God and He manifests Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (v. 1)
- God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus has been offered to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 17:12)
- The world's culture involves worship of various pagan idols (v. 9)
- We serve the "living and true God" (v. 9)
- Spiritual opposition will come against believers in Jesus (Acts 17:5)
- During our struggles and pain, we can experience the "endurance of hope" in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3)
- Our testimony as followers of Jesus can reverberate (sound forth) through our communities (v. 8)



If we believe that Jesus is God's
Son AND He offers salvation to
all who would believe AND He is
going to return to earth soon,
what should we do today?

