

Does 1 Thessalonian tell us
when?

Lesson 7

Does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Tell Us When?

- We've studied 1 Thessalonians for 'what' the Rapture is, but does it tell us when.
- There are questions that arise, that should be examined to see if clues exist pointing toward the timing.
- Clues:
 - What Does The term 'Last Trumpet' mean
 - What about Chapters 4-5?

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4

- 1 Thessalonians 3:3–4 says, "That no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know."
- Notice that Paul speaks of tribulation which *already* came to pass. He mentions nothing about the future great tribulation. Is this a possible clue?
- Paul's main subject in this epistle is the events surrounding the great tribulation. If he were writing about something else I wouldn't expect him to mention the great tribulation, but when this is a major point, the omission is highly significant.

1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 (2)

- Remember, Paul is leading up to his main point, events surrounding the great tribulation. Remember, he is known for making his arguments as strong as possible, like a lawyer. How natural, then, would it be for him to jump at this golden opportunity to cap off his exhortation by saying, "Be patient in present tribulation, even as we will need ultimate patience in the ultimate tribulation. Present tribulation prepares for the future tribulation. Learn patience now because you will need it even more when the great tribulation comes."
- If God's saints are to go through the great tribulation, Paul passed up a perfect opportunity to tell the saints to have patience for it.
- Did Paul's lawyer-like mind really slip? Or did the Holy Spirit prevent him from mentioning the great tribulation because we will not go through the great tribulation?

Of What were The Thessalonians Ignorant?

- Why is it so important to know what the Thessalonians were ignorant of? It is important, because if we understand their ignorance, then we can better understand Paul's answer.
- The way Paul answers is very interesting.
- If you were a Bible teacher in Paul's day, how would you answer the Thessalonians? Remember, we have to prove to the Thessalonians the *fact* of resurrection, not the order primarily; so let us concentrate on that aspect. If you wanted to teach the Thessalonians the fact of the resurrection, how would you do it? Many verses plainly teach the resurrection like [Daniel 12:2](#)
- Paul did *not* refer to a Scripture like [Daniel 12:2-13](#). Instead he shared a word that he received directly from the Lord. Why? A *different* resurrection at a *different time*?

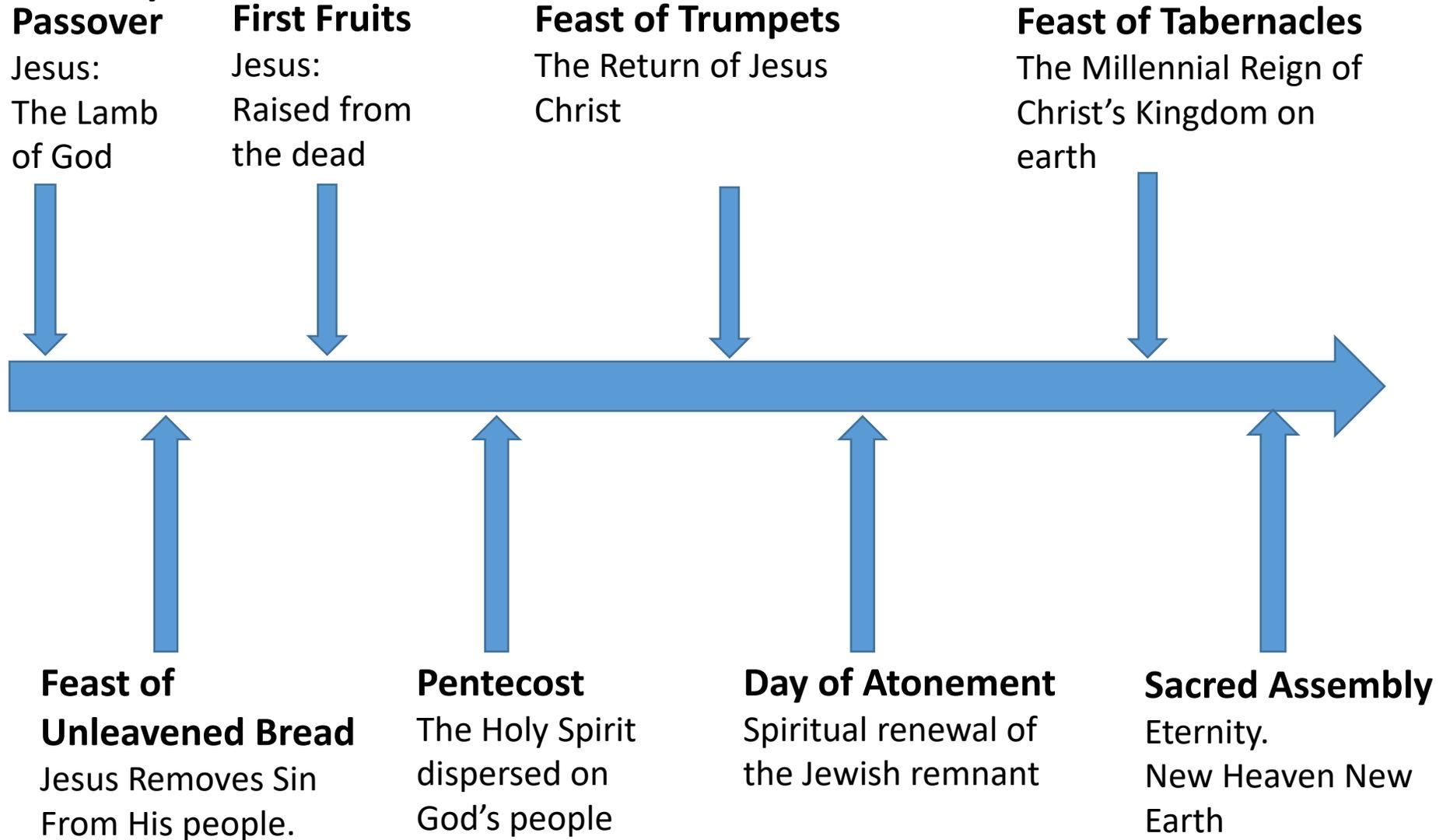
Of What were The Thessalonians Ignorant? (2)

- The answer is in the last verse, "For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" ([Daniel 12:13](#)). Daniel's resurrection is at *the end of the days*. When is that? Daniel gives three sets of days in this chapter. Verse 7 gives 1260 days (a time, times, and an half) which is the day that Christ returns as we saw in Chapter 2. Verse 11 gives 1290 days. Verse 12 gives 1335 days. Three sets of days. Daniel's resurrection is at the *end of days*. The 1335th day!
- Day 1260 is the return of Christ and day 1335 is the resurrection of Daniel. Therefore, Daniel's resurrection comes *75 days after* Christ's return.
- Yes, the difference between Paul's resurrection and Daniel's resurrection is very real. In Paul's resurrection the dead are raised *first*, the moment Christ descends in the clouds. In Daniel's resurrection, the dead are raised *later*, 75 days after Christ returns. These two men are talking about *two different resurrections*, different resurrections at *different times*.

The Last Trump

- The "trump of God" which signals the rapture in [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#) is identified as the "last trump" in [1 Corinthians 15:52](#).
- What makes this the last trumpet? If this is the *last* trumpet, then what were the *first* trumpets?
- Post-tribs take us to the book of Revelation which tells of seven angels blowing seven trumpets during the tribulation. They reason that the rapture trumpet must be the seventh trumpet or after these seven tribulation trumpets in order to be last. This would clearly place the rapture at the *end* of the tribulation instead of at the beginning.
- With this in mind, let us ask the question, "When Paul spoke of the last trumpet, did he have in mind the seven trumpets of Revelation as the first trumpets?"
 - This is doubtful since the Book of Revelation was not even written by Paul's time!
 - So its impossible for the last trumpet to be understood by a reference in Revelation.
- A faithful Corinthian or Thessalonian would consult the Old Testament for answers. In [Leviticus 23](#) we learn of The feast of trumpets!

Feast Cycle



How Does The Feast of Trumpets Indicate Timing?

- If you were a Jewish farmer your holiday schedule would go like this:
 - The Feast of First-fruits celebrated the first of the barley harvest.
 - 50 days later Pentecost observed the end of barley harvest and the beginning of wheat harvest ([Exodus 23:16](#); [Deuteronomy 16:16](#)).
 - 6 months later the Feast of Trumpets occurred near the end of the summer's ingathering.
 - 15 days later the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the completion of the ingathering ([Leviticus 23:39](#); [Deuteronomy 16:13](#)).
- After the resurrection of Christ, Pentecost signaled the beginning of the harvest of men's souls into the church. That harvest continues now until we hear the “trump of God” at the rapture.
- The Last Trumpet signals the occurrence of the Rapture and not the timing of the Rapture in relationship to the Tribulation

Two Silver Feast Trumpets

- In addition to 1 Corinthians 15 which applies the trumpet to the church, indication of double reference comes from [Numbers 10:1-10](#), The Lord told Moses to make *two trumpets* of silver.
 - [Isaiah 27:12-13](#): One is fulfilled in Israel
 - [1 Corinthians 15:52](#): One is fulfilled in the church.
- The trumpets were blown to "gather" the people ([Numbers 10:2-3, 7](#)) just as God will blow the trumpet to gather the church and to gather Israel on separate occasions.
- But how do we know that these two silver trumpets were the same ones blown at the Feast of Trumpets? Because [Numbers 10:10](#) says that these should be blown "in the beginnings of your months." And the Feast of Trumpets was the beginning of the seventh month.

Relationship Between Chapters 4-5

- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 previews Chapters 4 & 5.

- "...to wait for his Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead,.."
 - Previews Chapter 4 where the resurrection of Jesus is the basis for the resurrection of our loved ones.
 - Chapter four speaks of deliverance from death
- "...who delivered us from the wrath to come."
 - Previews Chapter 5 where deliverance from wrath is the basis for alert/self-controlled living.
 - Chapter five speaks of deliverance from wrath.
- The phrase "to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead" anticipates chapter four where the resurrection of Jesus is the basis for the resurrection of our loved ones
- Timing is not revealed here, only a description of God's plan for resurrection. The wrath is not the tribulation, but for final judgment.
- Let's look closely at 1 Thessalonians 2

Chapter 4	Dead believers	Appointed to life	Have hope
Chapter 5	Living unbelievers	Appointed to death	Have no hope

What Is The Day Of The Lord?

“For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” ([1 Thessalonians 5:2](#))

- What did those Thessies Know?
 - Did they know perfectly signs of the coming rapture? No, they knew perfectly of the day's *surprise upon unbelievers*.
- What is the *Day Of The Lord*? When is it?
 - the day of the Lord begins after the tribulation with the return of Christ through his reign on earth.
- In what context is "...as a thief in the night....."

The Day of The Lord Is Not The Great Tribulation

The Day Of The Lord	Tribulation Period Attributes
Post Tribulation event	7-Year Event beginning when Israel signs a 7-Year Agreement.
Sudden & Total Destruction	Gradual & Partial Destruction
Total Destruction	Partial Destruction
	<p>Before The Day of the Lord:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun, Moon turns to blood and darkness • Elijah the prophet must come
<p>How different from the time when "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa 2:11, 17). The tribulation surely is not the day of the Lord.</p>	<p>Tribulation is the Day of Man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Christ, but antichrist is on the throne of earth. • Men all over the world shake their fist at God, • raise their blasphemies to an unprecedented pitch, and • cling more tenaciously to their idols.
<p>The Day of The Lord Is in the valley of decision (Armageddon)</p>	<p>The Last event of the Tribulation: Armageddon</p>
<p>There is no distinction between the "day" of the Lord and the "great day" of the Lord (Joel 2:11, 31)</p>	

The Day Of The Lord Will Come Like A Thief In The Night

- According to Paul's logic (as revealed by the conjunctions), it is the night people who have to watch out for the thief, not day people.
 - Thieves generally strike at night, not in the day.
- Day people are concerned with living, not looking.
 - If it is daytime at your house, do you stand at the window looking for a thief to come?
 - You do your job, you stay awake, you stay sober, but you don't worry about the thief.
- *The context deals with the life we live, not with what we look for. What good does it do to look for the thief in the daytime?*
- Not only do we have a day-night difference, but we have a destination difference.

Does not the day of the Lord include the rapture? If it does, I do not know of any Scripture which says so. All we can be certain of is that the Day Of The Lord brings "sudden destruction," and this comes after the rapture

Looking or Living?

- Does the context really imply looking? Why look? Are we supposed to look *in order to avoid destruction*?
 - That doesn't make sense because the destruction represents no danger to Christians
 - If the destruction of the day of the Lord is no danger to us, why look for it?
 - Furthermore, mere looking doesn't exempt anyone from destruction.
- It is the *life we live*, the surrender of our wills to God, that makes us ready to meet the day of destruction.
 - An unbeliever can fearfully look for the day of the Lord, but that won't help him when the time comes.
- If destruction is the reason, then living makes better sense than looking.
- Paul's purpose in this section is to "edify" (verse 11), to build up our *living*, to put it on a higher plane.
 - So why look? Are we supposed to look *in order to see signs* so that we know when the day is near? That doesn't make sense in this context because these signs have not appeared yet.
 - In [2 Thessalonians](#) Paul explains what these signs are and he says that since these signs have not occurred yet we should concentrate on living instead of looking.

Looking or Living? (2)

- If I were a post-trib I would have no way of looking for the day of the Lord until the abomination of desolation occurred first.
- So why look? Are we supposed to look so that we won't miss the rapture? According to [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:51](#) we all will be raptured, looking or not, ready or not. The result is the same. We will be just as raptured, and they will be just as destroyed.
- So why look?

And What Are We Looking Toward?

- Read [2 Peter 3:12-13](#)
- The new heavens and the new earth is what we look for. This aspect of the day of the Lord occurs, not when Christ returns, but 1000 years later (see [Revelation 20 - 21](#)).
 - We look for an event 1000 years *beyond* the rapture,
 - 1000 years *after* we get our new bodies,
 - 1000 years *past* the time when we have gone to be with Christ.
- The looking that Peter talks about, therefore, proves nothing about when the rapture occurs, because his looking is 1000 years removed from the event

And What Are We Looking Toward? (2)

- We do look for the day of destruction at the *beginning* of the day of the Lord. Now as I am on earth, I look for it; and when I am raptured and in heaven, I will still be looking for it. Mere looking proves nothing whatsoever about the time of the rapture. And as I look, I get my Scriptural support for looking from [Revelation 6:9-11](#) where the souls under the altar, although in heaven, still look for the day of destruction. If from heaven we can look, then looking proves nothing about Rapture timing.
- In a nutshell,
 - Paul does not *say* to watch for the day of the Lord.
 - The context does not *imply* to watch for the day of the Lord.
 - Even if Paul did say or imply to watch for the day of the Lord, looking for that day would still not prove the Rapture timing because we can look from heaven.