

## THE PARENTHETIC PROMISSORY EPISTLES – EXPECTATIONS

### 1 THESSALONIANS

This historical setting and occasion for this Epistle is found in the book of Acts (Acts 17:1-5 & 18:5)

By constraint of the Spirit of God, after Paul had revisited the scenes of his first missionary journey, he was led to go across to Macedonia. He perceived in a vision a Macedonian man who entreated him, "cross over into Macedonia. Help us !"

In response to this appeal Paul and his party founded an Ecclesia in Philippi, to which he afterwards penned the epistle of that name. After being beaten and imprisoned, they are requested to leave the city, and came to Thessalonica.

Paul first reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue for three Sabbaths, showing from their Scriptures that Christ must suffer, die and rise from among the dead, and that Jesus was their Messiah. Some believed but others did not. As at Pisidian Antioch. Acts 13:46-48.

*" .....yet, since, in fact, you are thrusting it away, and are judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life, Lo! We are turning to the nations....."*

Paul then turns to those outside the pail of Judaism and of those a vast multitude believed. But, as at Pisidian Antioch, the unbelieving Jews stirred up a persecution against them so that they were sent away. After going to Berea (Acts 17:10) and Athens (Acts 17:15-34), he came to Corinth, where both Silas and Timothy joined him (Acts 18:5 & 1 Thes.3:6) and where he probably wrote this Epistle, the first of all the writings of the Greek scriptures.

Paul did not wish to leave the Thessalonians. They had only just received the evangel and so needed to be taught and confirmed in the faith. He was deeply concerned about them and sought twice to return to them, but was hindered. So he sent Timothy in his stead, whose report of them greatly comforted him. Not being able to go to them, he pens this Epistle.

The literary framework shows that the whole Epistle takes its colour from the persecutions endured by these Thessalonians. At that time they were suffering from the anger of men, but they will be saved from the indignation of God. The Jews who persecuted them are drawing down God's indignation, but the Thessalonians will never be subjects of His wrath. (1 Thess. 1:10 & 2:16. & 5:9)

The Doctrinal burden of the Epistle is based on the truth of the Lord's future appearing. He had taught this during the few days he was with them, but it needed further explanation.

Some had died and some were indifferent. Would these two classes be left out when He comes?

The answer is that "Those who are dead will be raised first and accompany the living when they are 'snatched' (as the Greek word implies) up to meet the Lord in the air". They will not be left behind. So, too, those who do not watch.

The death and resurrection of Christ provides for their salvation from future wrath, quite apart from their present walk.

All who are His, whether watchful or drowsy shall be caught up and live together with the Lord.