

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## What Paul Taught About Jesus' Return

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"I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

"For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed..."

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

"Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him... <sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple ('sanctuary') of God, displaying himself as being God. <sup>8</sup> ...whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming..."

2 Thessalonians 2:1,3-4,8

The prophet Daniel had said that the kingdom God initiated would fill the earth, and displace all other kingdoms. He introduced the idea of a "little horn", a political/military leader, who would come out of nowhere, and displace other leaders. He will be an arrogant boaster who would oppose the saints, and war against them. He would exalt himself, and even speak against God. He will put a stop to the regular worship, and will set up a disgusting, desolating thing in the "holy place". Yahweh will pass judgment against him, and he will be destroyed and be "given to the eternal fire" (7:8,11,21). **One like a Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven will receive the kingdom forever, and the saints will reign with Him.** Even though Daniel was *in exile*, and praying for God to restore Israel to their land, God told him that not only would they be restored, but driven into exile *again*. Jesus spoke about this second destruction of the temple. He also talked about the various signs that would occur throughout the age, warning His people to stay calm and on task. They are to proclaim the good news as a sign to all nations, "and *then* the end shall come" (Matt. 24:14). Then **Jesus also mentioned that they will see "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place"**, referring to Daniel's prophecy. **Then, there will be a great tribulation**, more intense than had ever been experienced. This could potentially kill all flesh, but because God's people will be there, He will cause that time to be cut short. **There will be false christs and false prophets, who will try to deceive everyone.** He warns not to believe anyone who says that He will come in secret, or in a hidden way, because **when Jesus returns it will be as plain as lightning that spreads across the sky.** People will see the sign of His coming. **He will send out His angels to destroy those who oppose Him, and to gather His chosen ones.** This description of His coming is confirmed in Acts by the angels present at Jesus' ascension. When He returns, He will come visibly on the clouds. In addition, Peter declared that **it was necessary for Him to remain in heaven until the "restoration" or "regeneration" of all things.** He will destroy or "cut off" all those who are opposed to Him (Acts 3:18-23). **He will be the judge of the living and the dead.**

**In the nineteen or so passages where Paul addressed the subject of end-time events, he concurs with this general outline.** There is no hint of any other "hidden return for the church", as some claim. There is more detail, but not any widely divergent teaching. **We are to wait eagerly for the "revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 1:7). **The word, "revelation" implies a "visible disclosure"** or "an appearing of something that was hidden". **Paul definitely taught that Jesus was coming back.** Even our observation of the Lord's supper looks forward to His return. We are to remind ourselves of that hope every time we eat of the bread and drink of the juice (1 Cor. 11:26).

**A key aspect of Paul's teaching about Jesus' return is that we will be radically transformed when He comes back.** We will be made alive like He is, at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20-22). **The dead in Christ will be raised imperishable, ...in fact, we will all be changed.** This perishable existence must put on what is imperishable. Our mortal bodies must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Our earthly "tent" will be "swallowed up by life", if we are still alive when He returns. If we had died, and had to "put off" our "earthly tent" (our physical bodies), and experienced the disembodied "nakedness" of physical death, ...we had gone to be "with the Lord", ...because to be in the physical body is to be away from the Lord, but to be away from the body is to be with the Lord. In any case, we will have a "dwelling from heaven" (a heavenly or glorified body), and our ambition will be to be pleasing to Him. **After the resurrection, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ** to receive recompense for what we did in

our earthly existence (2 Cor. 5:1-10). **We await our Savior, who will transform the body of our current humble state to be in conformity with the body of His glory** (Phil. 3:20-21). As Paul said in another place, “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then [we] also will be revealed with Him in glory (Col. 3:4). (The word for “revealed” here means “to be visible, appear”. When Christ appears, we will be like Him.) **Our hearts will then be fully established in holiness, when Jesus comes along with His holy ones** (1 Thess. 3:13). In fact, our spirit, soul, and body will be sanctified fully, and kept entirely (free from any fault or defect), at His coming (1 Thess. 5:23). **Then, we will always be with the Lord** (1 Thess. 4:17).

**What does Paul have to say about the events or timing leading up to the coming of the Lord?**

**First of all, we have to wait for it** (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; Tit. 2:13). It has *not* already happened, and **it will not happen, until the end, ...not before there will be a great apostasy of believers abandoning Christ, and not before the “man of lawlessness” (the son of destruction) will be revealed.** He will come with satanic signs and wonders to deceive people, and will sit in the sanctuary of God, attesting that he himself is God (cf. the little horn who makes desolate – Dan. 8:9-14,23-25). **It is the Lord Jesus Himself who will slay him, and bring his reign to an end by the appearance of His coming** (2 Thess. 2:1-12). **People will be deceived because they have already rejected truth.**

**Second, we are to be alert and clear-minded.** We are not to relax or get sloppy or lazy in our faith. **To those who are not watchful, or to those who do not believe, Jesus will return suddenly and surprisingly, ...like a thief in the night** (1 Thess. 5:1,2). Note what comes upon them: “While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” But for us, ...**for those of us who belong to Christ and are watchful and alert, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day might overtake you like a thief...”** (5:4). Why? Because we are children of light, and of the day. “Consequently, therefore, *not* might we sleep as the rest do, rather we let us be alert and clear-minded” (5:6). **The way it is worded seems to indicate that if we are not watchful and alert, we may not recognize what is happening, and may be caught unawares!** Jesus put it this way, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:22). Instead, since we *are* of the day, let us be clear-minded, and protect our hearts with the breastplate of faith and love, and our minds with the hope of salvation as a helmet. **What is the hope of our salvation based upon?** “...because God did not put us into wrath, but into obtaining salvation through Jesus.” This should give us confidence about the end. (Many versions translate this phrase as “God has not *destined* us for wrath”, but the verb is a past tense of “place” or “put”. Paul is not looking at a future destiny, but a *past act*, as a basis for our hope.)

**Third, when Jesus comes, He will repay with affliction those who have been persecuting His saints, ...and will give His people relief and deliverance from their sufferings.** He will come from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, and will deal out retribution to those who do not know Him and who have not obeyed the gospel. They will be cast away from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, on that day when He comes to glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at by those who have trusted in Him (2 Thess. 1:6-10). [Note: Clearly, believers *will be here* when He comes at the end to destroy the son of destruction.] 1 Thessalonians 1:10 says that Jesus “delivers us from the coming wrath”, ...i.e., the wrath that is accompanying Him will fall upon the wicked when He comes.

**Fourth, Paul delineates several events that will take place at Jesus’ coming.** (a.) **He will come with the sound of a trumpet** (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:16; cf. Matt. 24:31). (b.) **He will come with an angelic shout** (1 Thess. 4:16). (c.) **He will come with His angels** (1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7; cf. Matt. 24:31; Matt. 13:41,49; 25:31). (d.) **He will come from the sky/heaven** (Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7; cf. Matt. 24:30). (e.) **He will be in the clouds, and we will join Him there** (1 Thess. 4:16; cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64); (f.) **The dead in Christ shall rise first, then those who are alive will be caught up along with them to meet Jesus in the air** (1 Cor. 15:23,51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16,17; 2 Thess. 2:1; cf. Matt. 24:30,31).

**It is interesting that Paul specifies that the resurrection of the dead, and our transformation, will be with the sounding of “the last trumpet”** (1 Cor. 15:51,52). Since he is referring to “we will be changed”, I think it is safe to say that this is referring to the resurrection of those in Christ when Jesus returns. So, Jesus will return at “the last trumpet”. **When is the last trumpet mentioned in the scripture? It is the one in Matthew 24:31.**

It occurs *after* the “abomination of desolation stands in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15; cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-12),

...*after* the great tribulation that is more devastating than any other in history (Matt. 24:21-29),

...*after* the sun, moon and stars are darkened, and the powers of the heaven are shaken,

...*after* the sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, and all the tribes of the earth begin to mourn,

...and *as* they can see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

**Then,** Jesus will send out His angels with a great trumpet, and they will gather His chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other (24:30-31). This agrees with the trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4:16, ...where Jesus returns, the dead in Christ rise *first*, and those believers who are alive are caught up with them to meet Him in the air. **Then,** ...we will all be changed, ...our perishable bodies will be transformed into imperishable, our mortal existence will be replaced with an immortal one (1 Cor. 15:52-54). **Then,** what was earthy will be swallowed up by life. **Then, we will always be with the Lord! Then, death will finally be swallowed up in victory, ...the victory of Christ!**