

Introduction to NT Books

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XII. The Book of I Thessalonians

A. The Authorship of I Thessalonians

1. External Evidence— Church fathers such as Marcion, Irenaeus, and Tertullian attested to the Pauline authorship.
2. Internal Evidence—the author called himself Paul in 1:1 and 2:18.

B. The Date of I Thessalonians

1. Early in his second missionary journey (after AD 49), Paul started the church at Thessalonica.
2. He was forced to leave after 3 weeks and wrote back to the church sometime within in a year of its beginning (AD 50-51).

C. The Origin and Destination of I Thessalonians

1. Paul responded to the Macedonian call to go westward, and started a church in Philippi and then Thessalonica (Act 16-17).
2. He quickly left and received news from Timothy that the church flourished, and he continued his instruction about eschatology through this Epistle from Corinth.

D. The Purpose of I Thessalonians

1. He wanted to praise the assembly for its growth.
2. Paul dealt with details concerning the coming of Christ, and church life in light of the 2nd Advent.

E. The Characteristics of I Thessalonians

1. The Book may be outlined around I Thess. 1:3:
 - a. Faith in the Thessalonians' Past (2:1-12)
 - b. Love in the Thessalonians' Present (2:13-4:12)
 - c. Hope in the Thessalonians' Prospects (4:13-5:11)
2. Church members included Jason, Aristarchus, Secundus, and Demas.
3. The church had a testimony throughout Macedonia (1:8).
4. They received Paul's preaching and later writing as the word of God (2:13).

5. The church's spirituality gave Paul great joy (3:9 ff.).
6. He warned them about the temptation of fornication, and how the act despises the Spirit who forbids it (4:3-8).
7. He gave details about the "catching away" (ἁρπάζω *harpazo*)¹ of believers (4:13-18):
 - a. Those deceased Christians will be resurrected before living Christians;
 - b. All those "in Christ" will be raptured;²
 - c. The Lord Jesus Himself will come for His believers;
 - d. Paul had the expectation that he would be raptured;
 - e. The message of the Rapture is the message of comfort, as Paul called it elsewhere "that Blessed Hope" (Tit. 2:13).
 - f. The Rapture will precede the Day of the Lord which will include the Tribulation and Millennium (5:1-11; cf. Zech. 14:1 ff.); therefore the Rapture is "pre-Tribulation."
8. Paul instructed the assembly about proper care for the overseer (5:12-13).
9. He gave detailed teaching about behavior in the assembly services (5:16-22).

¹The Latin verb *rapiemur* is the root to the theological term "Rapture."

²There will be **NO** Baptist Rapture of some sort of a Baptist Bride!