



The Coming of the Lord

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 NRSV

The Burial
Romare Bearden (1964)

VOCABULARY

(From Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms by Donald McKim)

Evangelism (From Gr. Euangelion, “good news”) *The sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ through a variety of means.*

Parousia (Gr. Parousia, “coming”, “advent”) *A term used for the “coming of Christ”, most usually focused on the “second coming” or future advent.*

PAUL: ARTISAN MISSIONARY

Scholars assert that Paul was an artisan missionary working in Thessalonica. He likely learned the tent-making trade as a teenager, apprenticing under a skilled trainer. At the end of a 2-3 year apprenticeship, he would have received a set of tools (a stool, a table, a sharpening stone and oil for leather goods). It is believed that he used his workshop for missionary activities, and that the Christian community at Thessalonica was comprised of artisans who worked in a similar trade.

I Thessalonians was written in 50 A.D. It is considered the earliest of Paul's letters. Acts 17:1-9 recounts Paul and Silas' (Silvanus) second missionary journey during which they visited Thessalonica (an important trading center in Roman Greece). While Paul was there, a few Jews and many Gentiles converted to Christianity. Conflicts arose, and the apostle was accused of preaching a king other than Caesar. Paul and his companions departed; however, he would later send Timothy to help support the newly evangelized Christians. The letter to the Thessalonians was an additional effort by the apostle to encourage this community.

I. LETTER BEGINNING

1. **Sender (from whom)**

- Paul, Silvanus, & Timothy (1:1a)

2. **Recipient (to whom)**

- To the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father & the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1b)

3. **Formulaic Greeting**

- Grace to you and peace (1:1c)

4. **Thanksgiving/ Blessing**

- Faith, love, & hope (1:2-10)
- For accepting God's word (2:13-16)

II. LETTER BODY

1. **Initial Exhortation**

- Follow Paul's example (2:1-12)
- Paul's relation to Christians in Thessalonica (2:17-3:13)

2. **Thesis Statement (n/a)**

3. **Theological Discussions**

- Death, resurrection & the Parousia (4:13–5:11)

4. **Ethical Admonitions**

- Live according to God's will (4:1-12)

III. LETTER CONCLUSION

1. **Practical Matters**

- Respect church authorities, pray, etc. (5:12-22, 25, 27)

2. **Individual Greetings (n/a)**

- Greet all brothers and sisters (5:26)

3. **Personal Postscript (n/a)**

4. **Prayer or Doxology**

- May God sanctify you; May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you (3:11-13; 5:23-24& 5:28)



¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing,
¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
I Thessalonians 5:16-18 NRSV

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
The joys I feel, the bliss I share,
Of those whose anxious spirits burn
With strong desires for thy return!
With such I hasten to the place
Where God my Savior shows His face,
And gladly take my station there,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose truth and faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face,
Believe His Word and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care,
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
May I thy consolation share,
Till, from Mount Pisgah's lofty height,
I view my home and take my flight:
This robe of flesh I'll drop and rise
To seize the everlasting prize;
And shout, while passing through the air,
"Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!"



Be Barbara Kruger (1985)
Photo-offset lithograph and serigraph on paper



An *insula* was a city block that had the features of a modern apartment complex. On the ground level were shops and taverns run by craftsmen and shopkeepers.

IMPORTANT PATTERNS OF THOUGHT

Paul's Leadership Style

- Many view Paul as authoritative and demanding; however, in the letter to the Thessalonians, Paul's manner of leading demonstrates the use of affirmation and encouragement.

Question: How can consensus building and having a people orientation be an effective means to build ministry? What kind of interpersonal skills are needed as a leader to be effective in these techniques?

Friendship

- Paul's letter to the Thessalonians contains themes and language from the "friendly letter" tradition.

Question: How does the language of the text demonstrate the friendly nature of the letter? What imagery and analogies help to support this view?

Artisan Community

- Many scholars believe that the believers at Thessalonica were artisans who lived, worked and worshipped in their workshop.

Question: What is vocation? In what way can our our careers/jobs be a platform for ministry?

Male Audience

- 1st century professional guilds were only open to men. Women may have been present, but only in the role of domestic service. One can assume that the recipients of Paul's letter were primarily male.

Question: What happens to our reading in this century when men and women read the same text that originally held values, language and cultural norms for male members only?