

Acts 18

4 14 15

Review of Acts 18:1-18

- Last week we looked at how we as Catholics see and use the Scriptures
- **Acts 18** began with Paul leaving Athens and going to Corinth where he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla who had fled from Rome and grew the Corinthian church over 1 and ½ years
- Paul resumed his practice of preaching in the synagogue until he was thrown out
- Upon the arrival of Silas and Timothy Paul began preaching full time in the market place bringing many Greeks into the church

Review of Acts 18:1-18 (Cont)

- After being rejected by the Jews in the Temple, Paul condemned them as Jesus had taught his disciples to “when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet” (Lk 9:5)
- Paul moved into the house of Titus and his preaching from there caused the leader of the synagogue and family to join the Church
- Paul experienced a vision from the Lord encouraging him to continue his mission
- Finally, Paul was brought by the Jews before Gallio, the Roman proconsul, who refused to hear their complaints even after they beat up the ruler of the synagogue
- Finally, Paul says farewell and sails for Antioch

Review of 1st Thessalonians 1

- Paul's letter to the Thessalonians became necessary after Silas and Timothy related the concerns of the Thessalonian Christians to Paul concerning his teaching on the second coming of Jesus
- Remember that Paul had to flee Thessalonica and Beroea in great haste before he had time to complete his catechetical teaching
- We looked at the fact that Paul wrote 14 Epistles (9 to communities and 5 to persons)
- We examined the order of Paul's letter writing style

Review of 1st Thessalonians 1

(Cont)

- It is believed that Paul wrote this letter around 50-51 AD followed by 2nd Thessalonians a few months later
- We looked at **1st Thess 1:1-10** where:
 - Paul introduces his listeners to the Trinity using *Theos* for God and *Kyrios* for the Lord Jesus
 - Next, Paul presented his Thanksgiving section where he praised the faith of his readers
 - He then opens describing how they must suffer as he and Jesus suffered
 - Then he hints as to where he is going in this letter by referencing Jesus' resurrection from the dead

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 2:1-13** *“For you yourselves know brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; but though **he had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi**, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition.... While we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses,... into his own king and glory. And we also thank God...word of God which you heard from us.”*
 - Remember that we know from **Acts 16:22** that Paul was beaten with rods and thrown into prison in Philippi?
 - If we had not read **Acts** we would not have known this and we would not have understood why Paul was talking about these things here

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- The “gospel” referenced here is the “good news of the kingdom of God” which he had been preaching
- The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John did not exist at this time
- So Paul was saying that he was giving them an example of how to live
- Paul is letting them know that he understands the way they had suffered because of all the suffering he had experienced

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 2:19-20** *“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you our glory and joy”*
 - Here Paul discusses the coming of Jesus and hints again at where he is going in this letter *

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 3:1-4** *“therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and do exhort you, no one be moved by those afflictions...beforehand that we were to suffer affliction:”*
 - Paul is reminding beforehand that they will have to suffer as he is suffering
 - He is telling them not to blame him as he had warned them about this as being a part of the gospel

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 3:5** *“For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain.”*
 - It appears that he is worried that the Thessalonians had been completely apostatized
 - Due to their persecution it was possible that this might have happened

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1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 3:6-7** *“But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you ...and comforted about you.”*
 - They tell Paul that the members of the Church in Thessalonica were persevering in faith and charity, though they were being hassled by the non-believers
 - He also indicated how much he would like to speak to them face-to-face

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1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- The only advantage that the living will have over those who have died at that moment is that they will not have to die
- Based on this explanation you can see how Paul solves the problem *

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 4:13-14** *“But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, though Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.”*
 - Although Paul is saying that he is aware that they are unsure of certain things, we do not know exactly what is going on here
 - Obviously they have asked Timothy certain questions when he last showed up concerning what will happen to them when Jesus comes back for those who have died
 - Paul reassures them and tells them not to worry about them

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- This issue would indicate that the Thessalonians have not had sufficient catechism about the resurrection and they are worried about this
- They know that Jesus is going to come back because Paul told them that he would as one of the last things discussed before he had to leave town
- So here Paul is trying to explain the resurrection to them as he begins to tell them not to react to the death of friends and family as the pagans did for they have no hope or belief in the resurrection as we do

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 4:15-17** *“For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.... And so we shall always be with the Lord.”*
 - Paul tells them not to worry about the death of their friends because whoever dies before Christ returns will not be at any disadvantage over those who are still alive when Jesus comes the second time
 - He is saying that at the second coming of Jesus the dead will rise first and then those who are alive will be caught up with them into the cloud to meet Jesus

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- But Paul's image in his letter to the Thessalonians should be seen as the image of the King coming to visit a city and before he arrives the people would want to make sure that the city was aware that he was coming
- Long before the king arrived trumpets would sound announcing that the King was on his way
- The city gates would be opened and every citizen who wanted to be good to the king would pour out of the city to meet and welcome him to their city
- This would be the same as the preparations one would do when expecting someone's visit

An Explanation of the Rapture

- In 1830 Charles Darby, an Anglican priest living in England, turned Congregationalist (the group was called the Plymouth brethren) first presented the modern theory called the “rapture”
- His theory entered mainline Protestantism by what was called the “Stowfield Study Bible” and has now become the most influential and dominant theological reference point in Protestantism (even some Catholics believe in the rapture)
- The theory purports that Jesus, before he comes back to judge the world, will come back secretly on the clouds and find born-again Christians and take them on the clouds back to heaven and give them to the Father

An Explanation of the Rapture (Cont)

- Then Jesus will return to the earth to fight the antichrist who has by then arisen on the earth leading to the great battle of Armageddon in which Jesus will kill the antichrist
- This concept is known as “dispensationalism” within the rapture theory
- To be “raptured” means that one would be caught up into the clouds

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- Paul, in the letter to the Thessalonians, is using the image of Jesus' return as a king just like every citizen in the city would know when the king was coming
- There would be trumpet blasts, announcements by heralds and both those who were asleep or awake would arise and go out to meet the king and escort him into the city
- This is **not** about hanging out in the clouds with Jesus before going to heaven
- This concept is perfectly in accord with the other passages of the New Testament and our Catholic understanding of eschatology

Transition

- It appears that after the Thessalonians received the first letter from Timothy additional questions about this subject arose and were given to Timothy
- Timothy returned to *Ephesus* and explained to Paul that additional issues also needed to be resolved
- So Paul writes the **2nd Letter to the Thessalonians** to further expand the concept of Jesus' second coming

2nd Thessalonians

4 14 15

2nd Thessalonians (Cont)

- From the text we can see that the people were no longer going to their day jobs as they waited for the imminent return of Jesus
 - If one believes that Jesus' second coming is imminent how would one live his life?
 - Would we do the dishes or wash our clothes if he was going to come tomorrow and take us to heaven?
- Paul's major theme in 2nd Thessalonians was to tell the people to get back to work because Jesus was not going to come before many signs came to pass

2nd Thessalonians (Cont)

- This is important because in the Greek of **1st Thessalonians 4:16-17** Paul says “**we are alive**” in the present tense
 - This means “we who are alive right now” and it is a continuous aspect
 - It is important to understand this for it can easily be misread
 - Some understand this to mean **we who are alive shall not die** because Jesus must be about to return soon (within their lifetime)
 - Most likely one would change the way he is living if that were about to happen
 - But if it means that he is coming tomorrow or in 20 minutes, you most likely would not continue your normal behavior

2nd Thessalonians (Cont)

- From the text it appears that the people believed that Jesus was going to return within a few days or months or at max in about one year
- So they stopped working and started living like parasites off of the other people in the community who were still going to work
- So Paul was telling them that Jesus was coming back but there will be many things that will happen long before he arrives
- And even after all these signs he will come like “a thief in the night”

2nd Thessalonians (Cont)

- Unfortunately many people read 2nd Thessalonians out of context causing it not to make sense
- When we read the two letters together and in order within their historical context they make perfect sense
 - Paul was focused on eschatology because that was the issue that he was not able to clarify before he fled

Transition

- We will now return to **Acts 18:18**