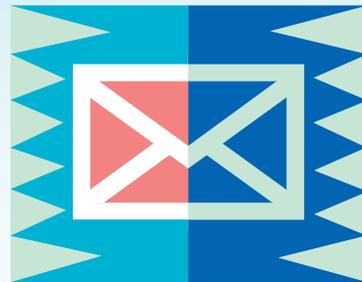


# New Testament Survey

# Standing firm in persecution

Studying 1 and 2 Thessalonians



*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2

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# Standing Firm in Persecution

## *1 and 2 Thessalonians*



### **LESSON OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction
- II. Sent with love
  - A. Exploring 1 Thessalonians
  - B. Establishing the Historical Perspective
    - 1. Authorship
    - 2. Audience
    - 3. Geography
    - 4. Date
    - 5. General Background
  - C. Examining the Content
    - 1. Theme
    - 2. Key Verse
    - 3. Topics and Teachings
    - 4. 1 Thessalonians: Jesus Christ, The Coming One
- III. A second word!
  - A. Exploring 2 Thessalonians
  - B. Examining the Text
    - 1. Theme
    - 2. Key Verse (2:15)
    - 3. Topics and Teachings
    - 4. 2 Thessalonians: Jesus Christ, Our Returning Lord
- IV. Conclusion

Self Test

Appendix 1. Paraphrase of 1 And 2 Thessalonians

Appendix 2. Let's Look At 1 Thessalonians

Appendix 3. Let's Look At 2 Thessalonians

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson you should:

1. Know the author, audience, approximate date of writing, basic outline, key verses, and primary themes of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
2. Be able to explain the reason each of these books were written.
3. Be able to place Thessalonica on a map.
4. Have a renewed sense of urgency in relation to the second coming of Christ.
5. Be inspired to disciple others around you with the same love and effectiveness that Paul had for the Thessalonians.

## LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read through the entire lesson completing questions and exercises as you come to them, and checking your answers with those provided.
2. Read through the entire books of 1 and 2 Thessalonians **at least** twice during this lesson.
3. Read *A Look at the New Testament*, chapters 14 and 15 in the appendices.
4. Complete the Practical Assignment.

## WORD STUDY

**Apostasy**—rejecting or abandoning your religious beliefs, often in favor of an opposing view

**Christ/Messiah**—savior or deliverer; Christ comes from the Greek term *Christos* which was used in the New Testament because the New Testament was written in Greek; Messiah is the Hebrew of equivalent of Christ, it is used primarily in the Old Testament which was written in Hebrew

**Day of the Lord**—refers to the day when Jesus will return to the earth; the Second Coming

**Egnatian Way**—the primary land route across northern Greece connecting Rome and Asia Minor

**Eschatology**—teaching about the end times of the world and mankind

**The man of sin/lawlessness**—the ultimate opponent of Christ; leader of the end time rebellion; the Antichrist

# I. Introduction

As we begin our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians take the time to pray. Ask God to be with you through this study and to speak to your heart. Now keep your heart ears open!

This lesson consist of questions, exercises and assignments that will help you to dig into these epistles, opening up your understanding to the context in which they were written, and helping you to interact with God's Word. There are answers in the workbook to help you if you get stuck. In addition there is a self test included so that you can review what you have learned.

You need to have a Bible or New Testament which you will feel free to mark up as you will be required to make many markings. When you read, always keep a pen beside you so that you can mark whenever you find something particularly important to you. You will also need a personal notebook for written assignments. In addition there is a supplement, *New Testament Geography*

and *Chronology*, which you must have to complete some of the exercises. If you did not receive one, please ask your leader.

You can do this study on your own, but it will be much more beneficial if you meet with a group and discuss what you are learning and discovering. We are meant to help and encourage and share with each other. It gives all of us more insights and greater joy. And then there is the issue of accountability. So often we have good intentions, but... Life is full and we easily lay aside a study, and then it gets buried. We need to spur each other on! Knowing that you are going to meet with a group often provides that extra incentive to dig in and learn. And every moment spent in the Word of God will build truth into your life and faith in your heart.

As you look at this first exercise remember that it has been said that the pencil is one of the best eyes. You will develop your Bible study skills more quickly if you write down your observations and mark things in your Bible.



### Exercise 1

*Read a paraphrase of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.* Read through 1 and 2 Thessalonians in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 is a paraphrase of these two letters. As you read imagine that you are either the author or the recipient of this letter. Do not spend a long time on this exercise, rather read through the books quickly in one or two sittings so that you can get the big picture. Take no more than 45 minutes to read.

## II. Sent with love

### A. Exploring 1 Thessalonians



### Exercise 2

*Read and mark 1 Thessalonians.* As you read mark the following words in your Bible.

Blue -- "Lord"  
Brown -- "Brethren"  
Orange -- "Coming"

Marking words that are used frequently throughout a book does not always lead us immediately to the theme of the book, but it does help us to think about what the author is emphasizing. Many times it indicates the tone of the book, or gives us a clue as to searching for specific teachings about Christ or God or the Holy Spirit. You will notice that "coming" was selected even though it is not used as frequently. Because it is not a frequently used word in the New Testament, it becomes important when we observe that it is used several times in this small book.

#### OUTLINE OF 1 THESSALONIANS

I.	Greetings and Commendation	1:1-10
II.	Paul's Love for the Thessalonians	2:1-3:5
III.	Timothy's Report: Faithful	3:6-4:12
IV.	Explaining the Coming Resurrection	4:13-5:11
V.	Final Instructions	5:12-28

As you look at the above outline take time to observe how these headings reflect the content of the book. You may want to expand this outline for your own use, or develop an outline that helps you to better understand and remember the content.

## B. Establishing the Historical Perspective

### 1. Authorship

Use your Bible to answer the following questions.



**Question 1** There are 3 people mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Who are they?

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With your own general knowledge of 1 and 2 Thessalonians you most likely have guessed that Paul was the author of these two books. Without going into the textual reasons for why this is accepted (i.e. vocabulary, style, doctrine), we will look for a simple way of establishing Paul's authorship.



**Question 2** Read 1 Thessalonians 2:18. How does this show us who the author is?

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**Question 3** Read 2 Thessalonians 3:17. Again, how does this show us who the author is?

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### 2. Audience

As you can see, these epistles were written to the Thessalonian church. Take time now to read Acts 17:1-10.



**Question 4** What kind of people did the Thessalonian church consist of?

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**Question 5** How long was Paul in Thessalonica to establish this church?

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### 3. Geography



#### Exercise 3

*Find Thessalonica on a map.* Take time now to find Thessalonica on Map 2 in the Supplement. Now look it up on Map 3. Circle the modern name on Map 3. Notice that Thessalonica is at a crucial point for both land and sea trade.

Thessalonica was a key city for accessing all of Macedonia. Much of the region's trade went through the city via the port or the Egnatian Way, which was the primary land route across northern Greece connecting Rome and Asia Minor (present day Turkey).



**Question 6** What bearing does this information have on your understanding of 1 Thessalonians 1:8? Think creatively!

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We will be learning more about Timothy later, but let us take a few minutes to see who Silas was.



**Question 7** Read Acts 15:22, 32, 40 and then write the facts you have learned about Silas.

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So, you can see the stature of this man Silas who worked alongside Paul.

#### 4. Date

As you read through 1 and 2 Thessalonians you probably noticed that they are similar in content. They were probably both written within a short time frame, around A.D. 51 or 52, not long after the church had been planted. Just like the Galatians, the Thessalonians would not have had any other parts of the New Testament nor had any of them heard Jesus himself teaching. All of their information and teaching came through the apostles and other visiting teachers or through letters.



#### Exercise 4

*Plot 1 and 2 Thessalonians on the dateline.* Turn now to the supplement on the chronology page and plot 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the appropriate blanks.

#### 5. General Background

It is very likely, given the dates mentioned above that both of the Thessalonian letters were written from Corinth. If we follow Paul's missionary journeys we see that after Thessalonica he went to Berea, Athens and then Corinth where he stayed for a year and a half (Acts 17-18; 18:1, 11). Take a couple of minutes to locate the map you drew for *New Testament Survey 1* with Paul's journeys marked on it. You may find it helpful to keep with your study materials for future reference.

We often think of Paul as a loner who went out there and conquered the world for Christ. He is so predominant with all of the letters he wrote, and all of the information we have about him compared to others of his time. But Paul was working with a team. It is true that he was the leader, we could say the drive behind it all, but he had other trusted people who ministered with him. We are going to look at the interplay between Paul and his companions as it related to their work with the Thessalonian church.



**Question 8** Read Acts 17:10. Who was forced to flee Thessalonica and where did they go to?

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**Question 9** Read Acts 17:13, 14. Who fled Berea and who stayed behind?

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**Question 10** Read Acts 17:15. Where did he go? Who was to join him as soon as possible?

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**Question 11** Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5. Who was sent to Thessalonica and why?

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**Question 12** Read Acts 18:1. Where did Paul then go?

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**Question 13** Read Acts 18:5. Who joined him there?

---

Paul himself could not visit Thessalonica because of the circumstances in which he had been forced to flee the city (Acts 17:5-10). So he was thrilled with the report from Timothy of their persevering faith.

He wrote 1 Thessalonians after receiving Timothy's report. The second letter was sent after he heard about some of the false teachings that were being propagated (2 Thessalonians 2:2), as well as some of the other issues in the church. Keep in mind, however, that with both of these letters, Paul was writing not only to rebuke and teach, but also to commend the church on their faith and perseverance in trials (1 Thessalonians 2:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:4).

### C. Examining the Content

#### 1. Theme

It is difficult to summarize all of 1 Thessalonians in one sentence. First Thessalonians has such a personal tone; the whole first half of the letter is taken up with Paul's commendation of the Thessalonians, while in the second half he deals with their fears concerning the second coming of Christ and encourages them to live worthy of it.

Paul's purpose in writing 1 Thessalonians is clear: he wanted to commend and encourage the Thessalonians while answering some of their questions and concerns. Paul and his team were not able to spend a long time in Thessalonica to establish this church, so it is understandable that there would be some confusion regarding different doctrinal issues.

One simple way to state the theme of 1 Thessalonians is

**Christ desires us to live holy lives of faith as we eagerly prepare for His return.**

#### 2. Key Verse

Most books have a verse which sums up the general theme of the book. In order to identify this verse we must first be familiar with the general theme of the book. Notice how 1 Thessalonians 3:13 relates to the theme stated above.



**Question 14** Write 1 Thessalonians 3:13 on the lines below.

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#### 3. Topics and Teachings

##### *Pastoral love*

As you read through 1 Thessalonians and completed the previous exercises, you may have noticed the incredibly gentle, loving tone in which 1 Thessalonians is written. If you have not yet noticed this take the time to read very quickly through chapters two and three.



**Question 15** How did Paul refer to himself in 2:7 and 2:11 in relationship to the Thessalonians?

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He is not demeaning them, but rather expressing his great love for them. First Thessalonians 3:1 leaves no room for doubt about the place these people held in Paul's heart.

### **The Holy Life**

Paul used this short little epistle primarily to encourage the Thessalonians, but also to teach them about the return of Jesus Christ. He commended them for their faith and their faithfulness (1 Thessalonians 1 and 3:5-8) while at the same time encouraging them towards growth and reminding them that they had not yet achieved full maturity (1 Thessalonians 3:9-4:1 and following verses). He gave these dear children-friends of his some very specific instructions on how to live the Christian life (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12).

### **Example of Discipleship**

Paul is one of our earliest examples of a church planter. In this particular situation he laid a quick ground work and then was forced off of the scene. But he did not abandon them and there is much we can learn about establishing churches from his example. He included all of the following elements, all of which are necessary to disciple someone:

- ✓ Prayer
- ✓ Encouragement
- ✓ Teaching
- ✓ Correction
- ✓ Challenge



#### **Exercise 5**

*Prepare to disciple.* In your notebook, write down at least one verse exemplifying how Paul did each of the above in his letter to the Thessalonians. Are you involved in evangelism and church planting? How are you discipling new believers? How can you use Paul's example? Do you have the same love he did?

### **Return of Christ**



**Question 16** Read 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23. What phrase do all of these verses have in common?

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Obviously, an important doctrine in the epistle of 1 Thessalonians is the Second Coming of Christ. Some hold that this is the theme of the book. Others simply teach or study the passages referring to the Return of Christ, while missing the other portions of 1 Thessalonians. The teaching about the coming of Christ is actually only from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. However as we have all small portions of teaching on the Second Coming, it tends to be emphasized.

As you teach and preach, look at the text and the context, so that you will not miss the great gifts that God has hidden for you to find.

At this point we will not go into a lengthy study of the Second Coming of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 sums up the essential teaching very neatly:

*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 shall rise first. Then we who are*

*alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

For the person who has accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ, there is so much comfort and hope in these words! So many people argue about the Second Coming of Christ and when it will happen and what it will look like. Paul did not write this to clarify all those details, but to remind his children-friends (and us) that Jesus **will** come! Paul even foresaw that these things might become an issue and in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, he reminds us,

*Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.*



### **Practical Assignment: Apply What You Have Learned**

1 Thessalonians has many short, practical instructions. Choose one of these, making sure it is in context, and write it in your notebook. Now turn it into a personalized statement. For example 1 Thessalonians 5:16, “I must rejoice always.” After personalizing it, write down four statements of how you can put this into practice in your life. For example, “I will rejoice when the bus is late,” or, “I will rejoice when someone criticizes me.” These statements must be immediately practical in your life, something that you can use during the next week.

Now purpose to put into practice immediately God’s revealed will for you. Memorize the verse from which the statements are taken and each time you come across a situation where you can apply it, say the verse and practice living it. Be prepared to share what you have learned at the next group meeting.

## **4. 1 Thessalonians: Jesus Christ, The Coming One**

Read Appendix 2, Chapter 14 of *A Look at the New Testament* and then answer the following questions.



**Question 17** What verses in 1 Thessalonians depict Jesus Christ as “The Coming One”?

### ***Christ’s Coming—An Inspiration to Young Christians***

Dr. Mears points out that the first few verses of 1 Thessalonians carry a very important two-fold message. The first part relates to our job as witnesses of Jesus. Do we merely point the way to Him and then leave people there, or do we root them in the Lord? The second part of the message relates to our prayer life. Do we pray for those we witness to or for those who have come into relationship with Jesus under our ministry? What about for others in our sphere of influence?



### **Exercise 6**

*Recognize your witnessing habits.* Based on your answers to the above questions and your knowledge of your witnessing life, answer the following questions in your exercise notebook.

- ⇒ How many unsaved people did you personally speak to about Jesus in the last month? Write their names in your notebook.
- ⇒ Is this an average amount for you or was something different this month compared to other months?

- ⇒ How can you be more involved in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- ⇒ Beside each name write down how many times you have prayed for this person by name during the last month.
- ⇒ Now write down the names of five people that you are acquainted with who do not know Jesus. How many times have you prayed for these people individually over the last month?
- ⇒ Take time to pray for them now before moving on in this lesson.

### ***Christ's Coming—An Incentive to Love Among Christians***



**Question 18** What report did Timothy bring back?

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Dr. Mears comments that “the test of any hope a man holds is what it does for him NOW.” Imagine a young man or woman who one day hopes to be married. This hope helps them to keep themselves pure for that day. We are the bride of Jesus Christ; how should this affect our lifestyle as we wait for the day His return?



**Question 19** According to the appendix reading in what four ways should our lives reveal our future hope? Are there any others that you noticed in your study of 1 Thessalonians?

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### ***Christ's Coming—A Comfort to the Bereaved***



**Question 20** What is the order of events for the second coming of Christ Jesus?

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### **Food for Thought**

What are some ways that you can demonstrate the hope that you have in Christ? Like a mother waiting for her son or husband to return from war or a bride waiting for her bridegroom, what are some things that you can do to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus?

The Bible is full of help for this and you may want to take some time to look up passages and references for your examples. You might even want to make this into a Bible study or sermon.

Remember though, it is important to be specific and practical. A few ideas to get you started include Scripture memorization, developing your relationship with Jesus through prayer and Bible reading and witnessing. Start by listing things that you can begin doing to prepare today!

## **III. A second word!**

Because 2 Thessalonians was written within a short time period of 1 Thessalonians it has essentially the same background information as 1 Thessalonians, therefore there will not be a separate “Establishing the Historical Background” section for 2 Thessalonians.

You will notice that the tone of the letter is somewhat different from the first one. Love is expressed but there is a stronger tone, perhaps because although many responded to the first letter, there were still some who were not, and so they needed a “stronger” message.

## A. Exploring 2 Thessalonians

Below is a very simple outline of 2 Thessalonians<sup>1</sup>:

OUTLINE OF 2 THESSALONIANS	
I. Greetings, Thanksgiving and Prayer	1:1-12
II. Instruction on Christ's Coming and Christian Conduct	2:1-17
III. Request for Prayer and Warning against Idleness	3:1-15
IV. Final Greetings and Benediction	3:16-18

The appearance of 2 Thessalonians is deceptive; for such a short book it holds some very important information! Paul packed everything that he could into this little letter.

As you read through 2 Thessalonians answer the following questions and complete the exercise. You will wish to read thoroughly so that you are well prepared for the questions.



### Exercise 7

*Read and mark 2 Thessalonians.* Use colored pencils to mark the following words in your Bible.

Blue -- "Lord"

Orange -- "Coming"

As you marked the word "coming" you may have noticed that one of the instances is **not** referring to the coming of the Lord. After you mark words, or even as you mark them, it is important to note whether they actually are related or not. Also in marking words, you will not have always covered all of that topic. Actually most of the verses in chapter 2 are related to the Second Coming of Christ, but it is not stated every time, or other words are used meaning the same thing. So, noting these words is only part of the process of observation. Nevertheless it will help you as you develop this skill.



**Question 21** In the first chapter Paul speaks of pride or boasting. In what context is he speaking of pride?

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**Question 22** In what verse does Paul mention the Kingdom of God and what does he say about it?

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**Question 23** What judgment will be dealt to those who do not obey Jesus?

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**Question 24** What rumors had the Thessalonians been hearing in regards to the Second Coming of Jesus?

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible*, New International Version Classic Reference Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 1349.

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**Question 25** What did Paul write them to respond to this rumor?

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**Question 26** How does Paul describe the coming of the “man of lawlessness?”

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**Question 27** How will the “man of lawlessness” be overthrown?

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What a wonderful image of the power of Jesus Christ! The “man of lawlessness” will be very wicked, but when Jesus comes He will remove him in an instant!



**Question 28** What did Paul have confidence about?

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Would he be able to say the same about you?



**Question 29** What was one of the problems in the Thessalonian church as seen from 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15?

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Often information about why a letter was written is contained right in the letter. In 2 Thessalonians we can see that three of the major reasons for writing the letter were to encourage the Thessalonian Christians, to answer their questions about the Second Coming of Jesus, and to deal with the laziness of some of the members. Can you find other reasons that this letter might have been written based on the text and context?

Notice how Paul ends the letter, “Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance” (2 Thessalonians 3:16). We know from 2 Thessalonians 1:4, 2:2-3, that the Thessalonians had been experiencing persecutions. Peace is not just for the good times, it is for *every* circumstance.

## B. Examining the Content

### 1. Theme

The theme of 2 Thessalonians is closely related to that of 1 Thessalonians. The letters were written within a very short time period, possibly as little as a few weeks or months. Very likely, Paul received more information after he sent his first letter and wanted to add a little teaching. As mentioned above there was a three-fold purpose to this letter which can be best summed up in the theme:

**Live the Christian life today in light of our future hope.**

## 2. Key Verse

One way to discover the theme of a book is to notice key words—words which are repeated or sum up certain verses or passages. One good rule is that if a word is repeated about as many times as there are chapters in the book it is probably a key word. Therefore, since there are three chapters in 2 Thessalonians, if a word is repeated three or more times it is probably a key word.

It is a little difficult to identify these words for 2 Thessalonians because it is such a short book, so we will help you along. In your previous reading of 2 Thessalonians you have noticed that Paul writes a lot about the signs of the Second Coming of Christ. We also see that he uses words like “Lord”, “lawless” or “lawlessness”, “thanks”, “sin/wickedness”, and “affliction/persecution” multiple times. You have already marked some of these in your Bible, but you may wish to mark more of them for future reference.

With these two pieces of information in hand it will be easier to identify the key verse. Remember, it is always important to read a verse in its context to be sure that you understand the meaning properly.



**Question 30** Write 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 on the lines below.

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## 3. Topics and Teachings

### ***Second Coming of Christ***

As in 1 Thessalonians the major teaching of 2 Thessalonians relates to the Second Coming of Christ. There were certain issues in the church that related to their understanding of Jesus’ return. Some people had even quit working because they believed Jesus was going to return any day! These people had begun living off of the church and were becoming lazy.

Paul was very definite that the “Day of the Lord” had not come yet as evidently had been rumored and reiterated what must take place before Christ’s coming.

- 1) Apostasy
- 2) The “son of lawlessness” will set himself up as God. In the temple of God.

This “son of lawlessness” will do signs and wonders that are false. But they will only deceive those who actually want to be deceived!

### ***Laziness***

Paul lays out first of all his example in working diligently so as not to burden any of them. Then goes on to deal with laziness which is associated with an undisciplined life and meddling in other people’s affairs.



### **Exercise 8**

*Pattern of discipleship.* We have an excellent example from Paul. He taught people how to live the Christian life, and did everything he could to make sure he was the example he should be, even when he could have justly taken an easier way. Examine your own life. What needs to be taught to young Christians? How are you putting these things into practice in your own life? Are you doing the “extra” so that they will have a pattern of excellence to follow? Or do you have spells of spiritual laziness? Spend time examining your heart and life.

In 2 Thessalonians Paul dealt with the issues at hand, such as laziness, but he also instructed the people on the foundational truths that they needed to know so that they would not go astray again in the future.

#### 4. 2 Thessalonians: Jesus Christ, Our Returning Lord

There are many different views about the return of Christ and the last days. The Bible is purposely vague on this topic, so as to keep us in eager anticipation of the day.

As you have probably already discovered in your appendix reading the author takes the point of view that the tribulation will come after the rapture of the church. This is a commonly held viewpoint. There are two others that should be considered, however. One view suggests that the rapture of the church will come after 3 ½ years of tribulation, the other argues that the tribulation will come first and then the rapture of the church.

All of these viewpoints stem from the Scriptures and can be “proven” from the Bible. Reality is that the Bible is not clear on this point and we need to simply “watch and pray” as we wait for the day of the Lord.

As you study this subject keep an open mind even if you do not agree with a certain position. Whatever you believe, your responsibility is to keep yourself pure before God as you wait for that day. Nor do we need to fear the tribulation if God allows us to experience part or all of it. God’s people have suffered often down through the centuries, and it was God’s grace that saw them through.

Read Chapter 15 of *A Look at the New Testament* in Appendix 3 and answer the following questions.



**Question 31** What is the great future event which the Church has been looking forward to since it began?

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#### ***Christ’s Coming—Comfort in Persecution***



**Question 32** What must God do before Jesus returns?

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#### ***Christ’s Coming—Instructions for Those in Confusion***



**Question 33** Who or what is the Antichrist?

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**Question 34** According to the *Word Study* what is apostasy?

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**Question 35** Mears suggests that four things must happen before the visible return of Jesus Christ to earth. What are these four things?

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## **Christ's Coming—Practical Preparation in Service**



**Question 36** What are two possible wrong attitudes about the Lord's coming?

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**Question 37** How can we remedy these attitudes?

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Mears states her views clearly on the Second Coming of Christ. However, as mentioned above not everyone agrees with her and we have explained the other views as well. It is not the purpose or intent of this course to advocate one view over another. Rather we would like you to use the information in this lesson and other lessons as a foundation for your own research, so that you can come to your own understanding and be able to explain your own convictions from Scripture.

## **IV. Conclusion**

The Thessalonian church is an inspiration to us. They were holding to their faith, which they had embraced only a relatively short time before. Paul was excited to see them holding firm. Not that there were no problems or weak people among them. There were. But they were eager to follow Christ. Nor did Paul just leave them to struggle on. Even though he could not be physically present, his heart was with them in prayer, in concern by sending others to them to check on them, and by writing to encourage and deal with issues at hand. Part of Paul's encouragement was his teaching about the Second Coming. We find some real gems concerning the end times and Christ's return and we can be challenged to strive towards holiness and spur one another on to good deeds as we await the Day of the Lord.

If you have enjoyed this lesson please note that it is one in a series of 12 lessons which cover the epistles of the New Testament and the Revelation. These lessons do not necessarily need to be done in order but we would encourage you to pursue your study of the scriptures both for your personal spiritual growth and so that you will be prepared to help others.

Other lessons are:

Lesson 1—James and Galatians—*The Truth about Faith*

Lesson 3—1 Corinthians — *Problems of the Church*

Lesson 4—2 Corinthians — *Ministry Defended*

Lesson 5— Romans — *Righteousness by Faith*

Lesson 6— Colossians and Ephesians — *Christ and His Church*

Lesson 7— Philemon and Philippians — *Joy and Forgiveness*

Lesson 8—1 Timothy and Titus—*Church Leadership*

Lesson 9—1 Peter, 2 Timothy & 2 Peter—*Encouragement and Warnings*

Lesson 10— Hebrews—*The New Covenant*

Lesson 11—Jude, 1, 2 & 3 John—*Love in Action*

Lesson 12—The Revelation—*Climax of the Ages*

# Self Test

Score: \_\_\_\_/100

## Matching (5 points each answer, \_\_\_\_/50)

### Match the book with the information

#### a. 1 Thessalonians

#### b. 2 Thessalonians

1. \_\_\_ So that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.
2. \_\_\_ So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.
3. \_\_\_ Key word: "Brethren"
4. \_\_\_ Key word: "Coming"
5. \_\_\_ Live the Christian life today in light of our future hope
6. \_\_\_ Christ desires us to live holy lives of faith as we eagerly prepare for His return
7. \_\_\_

- |  |
|--|
| I. Greetings, Thanksgiving and Prayer                    |
| II. Instruction on Christ's Coming and Christian Conduct |
| III. Request for Prayer and Warning against Idleness     |
| IV. Final Greetings and Benediction                      |

8. \_\_\_

- |  |
|--|
| I. Greetings and Commendation          |
| II. Paul's Love for the Thessalonians  |
| III. Timothy's Report: Faithful        |
| IV. Explaining the Coming Resurrection |
| V. Final Instructions                  |

9. \_\_\_ Paul rebuked laziness.

10. \_\_\_ The day of the Lord will come "as a thief in the night".

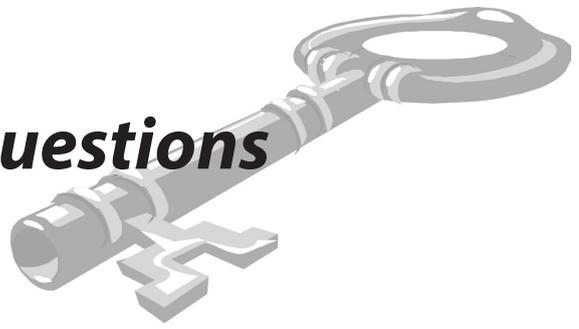
## Fill in the Blank (5 points each answer, \_\_\_\_/50)

### Write the correct answer in the blanks.

1. Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written by \_\_\_\_\_.
2. First Thessalonians was written in A.D. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Second Thessalonians was written not long after \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Thessalonica was a key city for accessing all of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians dealt with the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are two companions of Paul's who are mentioned in the Thessalonian letters.
7. Mears titles 1 Thessalonians "Jesus Christ, \_\_\_\_\_".
8. Mears' key title for 2 Thessalonians is "Jesus Christ, \_\_\_\_\_".
9. \_\_\_\_\_ planted the church in Thessalonica.

# Answers to Questions



## **Question 1**

Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

## **Question 2**

Paul refers to himself directly.

## **Question 3**

Paul writes some of it in his own hand to confirm that he has written this letter.

## **Question 4**

The Thessalonian church originally consisted of Jews, God-fearing Greeks and some of the leading women of the city (Acts 17:4).

## **Question 5**

We can see from Acts 17:2 that Paul was in Thessalonica for at least three weeks, but it is possible that he was there a little longer.

## **Question 6**

Paul wrote about how the faith of the Thessalonians had spread throughout the world. This would have been quite possible considering that many merchants and travelers would have come through the city by both sea and land. These people in turn could have taken the story of the Thessalonian church to other places.

## **Question 7**

He was a leader in Jerusalem and was sent by the church there to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. He was a prophet and encouraged and strengthened the believers in Antioch. He later was chosen by Paul to travel with him. This choice was approved by the brothers.

## **Question 8**

Paul and Silas. They went to Berea.

## **Question 9**

Paul fled and Silas and Timothy stayed behind.

## **Question 10**

Athens. Silas and Timothy.

## **Question 11**

Timothy was sent to strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian church in their faith, because Paul was afraid for them as they were persecuted.

## **Question 12**

Corinth.

### **Question 13**

Silas and Timothy.

### **Question 14**

Copy this reference from your Bible, as well as underlining it in your Bible. Meditate on it.

### **Question 15**

A nursing mother and a father.

### **Question 16**

“The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, or a very similar phrase.

### **Question 17**

1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23.

### **Question 18**

Timothy reported that the church stood fast in faith and love and that they remembered Paul with rejoicing.

### **Question 19**

Right living, consistent walk, purity and love

### **Question 20**

First Jesus will descend, then the dead in Christ will be raised. After that those who are still alive will be changed. At last everyone will be caught up to meet Him in the air.

### **Question 21**

Paul speaks of being proud of the Thessalonians’ perseverance and faith in persecution.

### **Question 22**

Paul mentions the Kingdom of God in 2 Thessalonians 1:5. He writes that the suffering of the Thessalonians was making them worthy of the Kingdom.

### **Question 23**

According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9 they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction and eternal separation from Jesus.

### **Question 24**

The Thessalonians had heard rumors that Jesus had already returned (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

### **Question 25**

Paul wrote that apostasy and the “man of lawlessness” must come before the Lord would return a second time (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### **Question 26**

We find Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10. The "man of lawlessness" will be revealed through Satan's work with power, signs, false wonders, and every sort of wickedness to deceive those who do not love the truth.

### **Question 27**

The Lord will slay him with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

### **Question 28**

2 Thessalonians 3:4, "And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command."

### **Question 29**

There were some members of the Thessalonian church who did not work, but simply lived off the Christian community and spent their time meddling in other people's affairs.

### **Question 30**

See 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 in your Bible.

### **Question 31**

The Second Coming of Christ.

### **Question 32**

God must finish His plan before Jesus can return.

### **Question 33**

The Antichrist is a counterfeit Christ (Messiah).

### **Question 34**

Apostasy means rejecting or abandoning one's religious beliefs, often in favor of an opposing view.

### **Question 35**

1. A great falling away from the faith
2. The "Lawless One" must be revealed
3. The Holy Spirit is taken away
4. The "Man of Sin" will open his awful campaign against the Lord

### **Question 36**

1. a restless and troubled heart because of having to wait so long
2. idleness because of the expectation that Jesus will renew the world when He returns

### **QUESTION 37**

We must be ready to serve, constantly preparing for the day when He shall come.

# Answers to Exercises



## Exercise 1

Your answer.

## Exercise 2

“Lord” occurs 24 times in 1 Thessalonians.

“Brethren” occurs 18 times.

“Coming” can be found four times, as it relates to the Second Coming of Christ.

## Exercise 3

The modern name for Thessalonica is Thessaloniki.

## Exercise 4

Your answers.

## Exercise 5

You will be discussing this in your group meeting so be prepared to share the verses you found, as well as ways to put into practice Paul’s example in this area of discipleship.

## Exercise 6

Your answers.

## Exercise 7

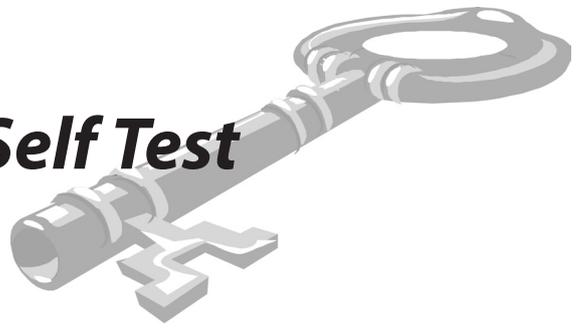
“Lord” occurs 22 times in 2 Thessalonians.

“Coming” can be found 3 times.

## Exercise 8

Make sure you are examining your heart--not just whether you look good on the outside. It is easy to deceive others, but it makes us ineffective in discipling. God’s power is not available to us when we pretend to be what we are not. We have no secrets from God.

# Answers to Self Test



## Matching

1. b.
2. a.
3. a.
4. a., b.
5. b.
6. a.
7. b.
8. a.
9. b.
10. a.

## Fill in the Blanks

1. Paul
2. 51 or 52
3. 1 Thessalonians
4. Macedonia
5. return or 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
6. Timothy, Silas
7. the Coming One
8. Our Returning Lord
9. Paul

# Paraphrase of 1 and 2 Thessalonians<sup>2</sup>

APPENDIX



## 1 Thessalonians 1

1 I, Paul, together here with Silas and Timothy, send greetings to the church at Thessalonica, Christians assembled by God the Father and by the Master, Jesus Christ. God's amazing grace be with you! God's robust peace!

### ***Convictions of Steel***

2-5 Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special. When the Message we preached came to you, it wasn't just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions.

5-6 You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you, and determined to live that way yourselves. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit!—taking the trouble with the joy, the joy with the trouble.

7-10 Do you know that all over the provinces of both Macedonia and Achaia believers look up to you? The word has gotten around. Your lives are echoing the Master's Word, not only in the provinces but all over the place. The news of your faith in God is out. We don't even have to say anything anymore—you're the message! People come up and tell us how you received us with open arms, how you deserted the dead idols of your old life so you could embrace and serve God, the true God. They marvel at how expectantly you await the arrival of his Son, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescued us from certain doom.

## 1 Thessalonians 2

1-2 So, friends, it's obvious that our visit to you was no waste of time. We had just been given rough treatment in Philippi, as you know, but that didn't slow us down. We were sure of ourselves in God, and went right ahead and said our piece, presenting God's Message to you, defiant of the opposition.

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994), 429-437.

## **No Hidden Agendas**

3-5 God tested us thoroughly to make sure we were qualified to be trusted with this Message. Be assured that when we speak to you we're not after crowd approval—only God approval. Since we've been put through that battery of tests, you're guaranteed that both we and the Message are free of error, mixed motives, or hidden agendas. We never used words to butter you up. No one knows that better than you. And God knows we never used words as a smoke screen to take advantage of you.

6-8 Even though we had some standing as Christ's apostles, we never threw our weight around or tried to come across as important, with you or anyone else. We weren't aloof with you. We took you just as you were. We were never patronizing, never condescending, but we cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did.

9-12 You remember us in those days, friends, working our fingers to the bone, up half the night, moonlighting so you wouldn't have the burden of supporting us while we proclaimed God's Message to you. You saw with your own eyes how discreet and courteous we were among you, with keen sensitivity to you as fellow believers. And God knows we weren't freeloaders! You experienced it all firsthand. With each of you we were like a father with his child, holding your hand, whispering encouragement, showing you step-by-step how to live well before God, who called us into his own kingdom, into this delightful life.

13 And now we look back on all this and thank God, an artesian well of thanks! When you got the Message of God we preached, you didn't pass it off as just one more human opinion, but you took it to heart as God's true word to you, which it is, God himself at work in you believers!

14-16 Friends, do you realize that you followed in the exact footsteps of the churches of God in Judea, those who were the first to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? You got the same bad treatment from your countrymen as they did from theirs, the Jews who killed the Master Jesus (to say nothing of the prophets) and followed it up by running us out of town. They make themselves offensive to God and everyone else by trying to keep us from telling people who've never heard of our God how to be saved. They've made a career of opposing God, and have gotten mighty good at it. But God is fed up, ready to put an end to it.

17-20 Do you have any idea how very homesick we became for you, dear friends? Even though it hadn't been that long and it was only our bodies that were separated from you, not our hearts, we tried our very best to get back to see you. You can't imagine how much we missed you! I, Paul, tried over and over to get back, but Satan stymied us each time. Who do you think we're going to be proud of when our Master Jesus appears if it's not you? You're our pride and joy!

## **1 Thessalonians 3**

1-2 So when we couldn't stand being separated from you any longer and could find no way to visit you ourselves, we stayed in Athens and sent Timothy to get you up and about, cheering you on so you wouldn't be discouraged by these hard times. He's a brother and companion in the faith, God's man in spreading the Message, preaching Christ.

3-5 Not that the troubles should come as any surprise to you. You've always known that we're in for this kind of thing. It's part of our calling. When we were with you, we made it quite clear that there was trouble ahead. And now that it's happened, you know what it's like. That's why I couldn't quit worrying; I had to know for myself how you were doing in the faith. I didn't want the Tempter getting to you and tearing down everything we had built up together.

6-8 But now that Timothy is back, bringing this terrific report on your faith and love, we feel a lot better. It's especially gratifying to know that you continue to think well of us, and that you want to see us as much as we want to see you! In the middle of our trouble and hard times here, just knowing how you're doing keeps us going. Knowing that your faith is alive keeps us alive.

9-10 What would be an adequate thanksgiving to offer God for all the joy we experience before him because of you? We do what we can, praying away, night and day, asking for the bonus of seeing your faces again and doing what we can to help when your faith falters.

11-13 May God our Father himself and our Master Jesus clear the road to you! And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you. May you be infused with strength and purity, filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when our Master Jesus arrives with all his followers.

## **1 Thessalonians 4**

### ***You're God-Taught***

1-3 One final word, friends. We ask you—urge is more like it—that you keep on doing what we told you to do to please God, not in a dogged religious plod, but in a living, spirited dance. You know the guidelines we laid out for you from the Master Jesus. God wants you to live a pure life.

Keep yourselves from sexual promiscuity.

4-5 Learn to appreciate and give dignity to your body, not abusing it, as is so common among those who know nothing of God.

6-7 Don't run roughshod over the concerns of your brothers and sisters. Their concerns are God's concerns, and he will take care of them. We've warned you about this before. God hasn't invited us into a disorderly, unkempt life but into something holy and beautiful—as beautiful on the inside as the outside.

8 If you disregard this advice, you're not offending your neighbors; you're rejecting God, who is making you a gift of his Holy Spirit.

9-10 Regarding life together and getting along with each other, you don't need me to tell you what to do. You're God-taught in these matters. Just love one another! You're already good at it; your friends all over the province of Macedonia are the evidence. Keep it up; get better and better at it.

11-12 Stay calm; mind your own business; do your own job. You've heard all this from us before, but a reminder never hurts. We want you living in a way that will command the respect of outsiders, not lying around sponging off your friends.

### ***The Master's Coming***

13-14 And regarding the question, friends, that has come up about what happens to those already dead and buried, we don't want you in the dark any longer. First off, you must not carry on over them like people who have nothing to look forward to, as if the grave were the last word. Since Jesus died and broke loose from the grave, God will most certainly bring back to life those who died in Jesus.

15-18 And then this: We can tell you with complete confidence—we have the Master's word on it—that when the Master comes again to get us, those of us who are still alive will not get a jump on the dead and leave them behind. In actual fact, they'll be ahead of us. The Master himself will give the command. Archangel thunder! God's trumpet blast! He'll come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise—they'll go first. Then the rest of us who are still alive at the time will be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Master. Oh, we'll be walking on air! And then there will be one huge family reunion with the Master. So reassure one another with these words.

## **1 Thessalonians 5**

1-3 I don't think, friends, that I need to deal with the question of when all this is going to happen. You know as well as I that the day of the Master's coming can't be posted on our calendars. He won't call ahead and make an appointment any more than a burglar would. About the time every-

body's walking around complacently, congratulating each other—"We've sure got it made! Now we can take it easy!"—suddenly everything will fall apart. It's going to come as suddenly and inescapably as birth pangs to a pregnant woman.

4-8 But friends, you're not in the dark, so how could you be taken off guard by any of this? You're sons of Light, daughters of Day. We live under wide open skies and know where we stand. So let's not sleepwalk through life like those others. Let's keep our eyes open and be smart. People sleep at night and get drunk at night. But not us! Since we're creatures of Day, let's act like it. Walk out into the daylight sober, dressed up in faith, love, and the hope of salvation.

9-11 God didn't set us up for an angry rejection but for salvation by our Master, Jesus Christ. He died for us, a death that triggered life. Whether we're awake with the living or asleep with the dead, we're alive with him! So speak encouraging words to one another. Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out, no one left behind. I know you're already doing this; just keep on doing it.

### ***The Way He Wants You to Live***

12-13 And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!

13-15 Get along among yourselves, each of you doing your part. Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person, attentive to individual needs. And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out.

16-18 Be cheerful no matter what; pray all the time; thank God no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live.

19-22 Don't suppress the Spirit, and don't stifle those who have a word from the Master. On the other hand, don't be gullible. Check out everything, and keep only what's good. Throw out anything tainted with evil.

23-24 May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!

25-27 Friends, keep up your prayers for us. Greet all the followers of Jesus there with a holy embrace. And make sure this letter gets read to all the brothers and sisters. Don't leave anyone out.

28 The amazing grace of Jesus Christ be with you!

## **2 Thessalonians 1**

1-2 I, Paul, together with Silas and Timothy, greet the church of the Thessalonian Christians in the name of God our Father and our Master, Jesus Christ. Our God gives you everything you need, makes you everything you're to be.

### ***Justice Is on the Way***

3-4 You need to know, friends, that thanking God over and over for you is not only a pleasure; it's a must. We have to do it. Your faith is growing phenomenally; your love for each other is developing wonderfully. Why, it's only right that we give thanks. We're so proud of you; you're so steady and determined in your faith despite all the hard times that have come down on you. We tell everyone we meet in the churches all about you.

5-10 All this trouble is a clear sign that God has decided to make you fit for the kingdom. You're suffering now, but justice is on the way. When the Master Jesus appears out of heaven in a blaze of fire with his strong angels, he'll even up the score by settling accounts with those who gave you such a bad time. His coming will be the break we've been waiting for. Those who refuse to know God and refuse to obey the Message will pay for what they've done. Eternal exile from the presence of the Master and his splendid power is their sentence. But on that very same day when he comes, he will be exalted by his followers and celebrated by all who believe—and all because you believed what we told you.

11-12 Because we know that this extraordinary day is just ahead, we pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he's called you to be, pray that he'll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something. If your life honors the name of Jesus, he will honor you. Grace is behind and through all of this, our God giving himself freely, the Master, Jesus Christ, giving himself freely.

## **2 Thessalonians 2**

### **The Anarchist**

1-3 Now, friends, read these next words carefully. Slow down and don't go jumping to conclusions regarding the day when our Master, Jesus Christ, will come back and we assemble to welcome him. Don't let anyone shake you up or get you excited over some breathless report or rumored letter from me that the day of the Master's arrival has come and gone. Don't fall for any line like that.

3-5 Before that day comes, a couple of things have to happen. First, the Apostasy. Second, the debut of the Anarchist, a real dog of Satan. He'll defy and then take over every so-called god or altar. Having cleared away the opposition, he'll then set himself up in God's Temple as "God Almighty." Don't you remember me going over all this in detail when I was with you? Are your memories that short?

6-8 You'll also remember that I told you the Anarchist is being held back until just the right time. That doesn't mean that the spirit of anarchy is not now at work. It is, secretly and underground. But the time will come when the Anarchist will no longer be held back, but will be let loose. But don't worry. The Master Jesus will be right on his heels and blow him away. The Master appears and—puff!—the Anarchist is out of there.

9-12 The Anarchist's coming is all Satan's work. All his power and signs and miracles are fake, evil sleight of hand that plays to the gallery of those who hate the truth that could save them. And since they're so obsessed with evil, God rubs their noses in it—gives them what they want. Since they refuse to trust truth, they're banished to their chosen world of lies and illusions.

13-14 Meanwhile, we've got our hands full continually thanking God for you, our good friends—so loved by God! God picked you out as his from the very start. Think of it: included in God's original plan of salvation by the bond of faith in the living truth. This is the life of the Spirit he invited you to through the Message we delivered, in which you get in on the glory of our Master, Jesus Christ.

15-17 So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. Keep a tight grip on what you were taught, whether in personal conversation or by our letter. May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech.

## **2 Thessalonians 3**

### **Those Who Are Lazy**

1-3 One more thing, friends: Pray for us. Pray that the Master's Word will simply take off and race through the country to a ground-swell of response, just as it did among you. And pray that we'll

be rescued from these scoundrels who are trying to do us in. I'm finding that not all "believers" are believers. But the Master never lets us down. He'll stick by you and protect you from evil.

4-5 Because of the Master, we have great confidence in you. We know you're doing everything we told you and will continue doing it. May the Master take you by the hand and lead you along the path of God's love and Christ's endurance.

6-9 Our orders—backed up by the Master, Jesus—are to refuse to have anything to do with those among you who are lazy and refuse to work the way we taught you. Don't permit them to freeload on the rest. We showed you how to pull your weight when we were with you, so get on with it. We didn't sit around on our hands expecting others to take care of us. In fact, we worked our fingers to the bone, up half the night moonlighting so you wouldn't be burdened with taking care of us. And it wasn't because we didn't have a right to your support; we did. We simply wanted to provide an example of diligence, hoping it would prove contagious.

10-13 Don't you remember the rule we had when we lived with you? "If you don't work, you don't eat." And now we're getting reports that a bunch of lazy good-for-nothings are taking advantage of you. This must not be tolerated. We command them to get to work immediately—no excuses, no arguments—and earn their own keep. Friends, don't slack off in doing your duty.

14-15 If anyone refuses to obey our clear command written in this letter, don't let him get by with it. Point out such a person and refuse to subsidize his freeloading. Maybe then he'll think twice. But don't treat him as an enemy. Sit him down and talk about the problem as someone who cares.

16 May the Master of Peace himself give you the gift of getting along with each other at all times, in all ways. May the Master be truly among you!

17 I, Paul, bid you good-bye in my own handwriting. I do this in all my letters, so examine my signature as proof that the letter is genuine.

18 The incredible grace of our Master, Jesus Christ, be with all of you!

# Let's Look At 1 Thessalonians

## *Thessalonians Portrays Jesus Christ, The Coming One*

Chapter 14 from *A Look at the New Testament* by Henrietta Mears<sup>3</sup>

Paul, accompanied by Timothy and Silas, had spent only three Sundays at Thessalonica, on his second missionary journey, but during that time he had not only founded a church, but had grounded it firmly in the faith.

It is an unprecedented thing even in the ministry of Paul, this establishment of a flourishing church in less than a month. He preached to them for three Sabbath days, although no doubt he continued his meetings during these weeks. Paul's success in Thessalonica has not been the usual experience of missionaries among the heathen. Carey in India, Judson in Burma, Morrison in China, Moffat in Africa waited each seven years for his first convert. But here, the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to reap a sudden harvest.

The main subject of the book is the Lord's personal coming again. It is the "blessed hope" of the Church. Let us find the outline of the book around this truth.

There should be nothing doubtful or divisive about this "blessed hope" of our Lord's return. No one can read the Word without finding it. Let us not quarrel with one another about so sweet a message as our Lord's "I will come again." The only dispute possible is with the Lord Himself. Let us rather be watchful, for we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.

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<sup>3</sup> Used by permission.

# Christ's Coming—An Inspiration To Young Christians

(Read 1 Thessalonians 1)

In Paul's greeting, he includes his fellow-workers, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. We can learn much from Paul. He knew the secret of friendship, that so many would like to possess. He loved people. The Bible tells us how to have friends. *He that hath friends must show himself friendly.* This is just what Paul did. He always acknowledged others in his service, and expressed appreciation of their part in every work done. His name is linked with his friends and associates. He never forgot them.

*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers* (1:2). Do we follow up our new converts as Paul did? Paul's converts were in more than a score of different cities, yet he carried them "all" in his heart and kept in touch with them.

Do you have a Prayer List? Do you pray for others by name? Do you "make mention" of your friends before God? If you find it difficult to speak to others about Christ, try speaking to Christ about others, and soon you will be speaking to others about Him. This is something all of us can do, even the most timid.

Are we realizing as Christians what we are in the world for? How seriously are we taking our task? Have we any evidence that we have been "approved of God" to be entrusted with the Gospel? Paul sets forth in this letter the intensity of his ministry; his willingness to die for his new converts; and his dealing with "each one."

Paul thanks God for this church. The beauty of this church did not consist of a gorgeous building of mortar and stone, but a people who are *in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.* (1:1) He is very pleased over the wonderful growth these young converts have made. He held them up as an example everywhere he went. (1:7) Already their zeal had made a profound impression all over Macedonia and Achaia (Greece), and everyone was talking about the wonderful way God had worked in this young, vigorous church at Thessalonica.

*Ye were ensamples to all that believe.* (1:7) This is what everyone in the world is looking for—Christians who live the Christian life, who act what they believe. This is just what the Thessalonians did. Nothing was mentioned of the financial condition of their "Annual Budget." But their faith in God was known everywhere. (1:8) Their missionary enthusiasm in sounding forth the Word of God had been felt all through Greece. They were what every church should be—an encouraging example to others.

# Christ's Coming—An Encouragement To The Faithful Servant

(Read 1 Thessalonians 2)

What a man was Paul! He preached to please God and lived to convince men of the truth of his preaching. His conduct commended his preaching. He was not a flatterer, neither did he seek wealth. He came simply as a child, and as gentle as a nurse caring for little children. He was never idle, but toiled night and day. Giving them this example of his own life, he pleaded with them to make their daily lives worthy of the name Christian.

Paul urges *that ye would walk worthy of God.* (2:12) A Christian’s walk is a Christian’s life. An Indian pastor who was worried over the inconsistent lives among some of his flock, said to a missionary, “There is much crooked walk by those who make good talk.” Our walk and our talk should be twins going along on the same trail.

**WHICH ARE YOU?**

**Self-Pleaser**

**Men-Pleaser**

**God-Pleaser**

Paul chose to please God. His life really counted before men, brought blessing to himself.

**Paul’s Crown**

Paul looked forward during these trying days to the *Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.* His greatest reward, after he has seen his wonderful Saviour’s face, will be to present the young converts of his ministry to Christ, letting them share in the glory of His advent. They will be his *crown of rejoicing* (2:19,20).

## Christ’s Coming—An Incentive To Love Among Christians

(Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-4:12)

This scene describes Paul’s “labor of love” among the brethren. Paul was aware of the strain under which the members of the church at Thessalonica were living. He sent Timothy from Athens to encourage them under their bitter persecution and to see how they were getting along.

Timothy had brought back the good news of their “faith” and “love.” This report filled Paul with unbounded joy. How glad Paul was to hear of their firm stand in the faith and to know that they thought kindly of him and his fellow-workers and longed to see them. In the midst of their persecution and suffering, Paul flashed the light of that wonderful day when they should be made perfect and unblameable, when they shall be changed in a moment, and be holy before God. (See 3:13)

The test of any hope that a man holds is what it does for him NOW. Paul told them that the coming of the Lord should be an incentive to

- Right living ..... 3:13
- Consistent walk ..... 4:1
- Purity ..... 4:3-7
- Love ..... 4:9,10

Paul urges personal purity, and a life that is consistent with their testimony. (4:1) This is the place where most Christians fail. Let us strive to have our lives beyond reproach. Our attitude toward each other should be one of love. You remember the two commandments Jesus gave. First, *Thou shall love the Lord thy God*, and second, *thy neighbor as thyself.* Paul charges us to *abound in love one toward another.* (3:12; 4:9,10)

We discover that looking for His glorious appearing does not mean a life of idleness. (Read 1 Thess. 4:11, 12.) If we were expecting a loved one to return home after a long absence, we would not just sit

down as the day of his return approached. Rather would we be busy getting everything ready, doing the things he wanted done. Can you imagine a mother waiting for her son to come home from the service, after being gone two years, just sitting down and letting everything go! She would be fixing up her son's room; she would be busy baking his favorite cake, and preparing his favorite food, as she listened for his footsteps. This is the true Christian's attitude concerning our blessed Lord's return. Our lives should be filled with noble expectancy which makes us busy Christians.

## Christ's Coming—A Comfort To The Bereaved

(Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

A little band of Indian converts in northwest Canada came to a missionary with a strange request. "We are always hearing what God has done," they said. "Now tell us what He is going to do."

Where would you find an answer to that wise question? We have it in our Bibles. He shall come again! (4:16) If one of your best friends said he was coming to see you, you would not rest until you found out when he was coming and how. But our wonderful Lord and Saviour says He is coming and He will transform the whole world and glorify all humanity. Can it be possible that we would be less curious about His coming than we would be about the fleeting visit of an earthly friend?

There is so much in these few verses that end with, *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* (4:18) There is comfort because of His sure return.

The Christians at Thessalonica were disturbed because of their mistaken ideas about Christ's coming. They were under the impression that Christ's coming was soon and they were worried as to what would happen to those who had died. What part would they have in His glorious coming and kingdom?

When Christ returns to earth, He will not come alone. Our loved ones who have fallen asleep in Christ "will God bring with Him." What a meeting that will be! Death does not end all. Parents and children, husbands and wives, loved ones and friends will be united. How anxious we are to know that "ours" will be in that happy throng.

*The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven.* (4:16) Christ does not say He is going to send the messenger of death to bring His bride (the Church) home. He is coming Himself for her! *This same Jesus, . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11). And *They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory* (Matt. 24:30). What a marvelous hope this is in a world where we are hearing the thunderings of disaster around us, and the rumblings of an earthquake of uncertainty beneath us. *Look up, for your redemption draweth nigh!*

Those who have Christian loved ones who have died should not give way to undue sorrow when they lay them in the grave for they have a double assurance from Christ's Word. There is the hope that one day all the dead in Christ shall rise. And the additional assurance that He may come again at any time. When Christ comes, He will greet the believers who are dead first and bring them with Him. (4:13,14) When the archangel shall sound the trumpet call of God, announcing the Lord's coming, then *the dead in Christ shall rise first* to meet Him. Then those that are alive and remain shall be caught up in the clouds to share with them the glory of His coming, and to be forever with the Lord. And Paul says, *Wherefore comfort one another with these words* (4:18).

The second coming of Christ was the bright hope of the early Church. The greatest fact of the past is that Christ came the first time, as a man, and died on the cross to free us from the penalty of sin.

The greatest fact of the future is that He is coming again, as a King, to free us from the presence of sin. This great truth not only gives us comfort, but inspires us to watchfulness. (Matt. 24:42)

*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.* (4:17)

Paul assures us that all shall not die before He comes. *We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.* (1 Cor. 15:51,52) Then we shall be *caught up together with them*. What a host of redeemed souls there will be—a *multitude no man can number*.

*And so shall we ever be with the Lord* (1 Thess. 4:17). Made like Him, we shall ever be with Him. He has gone to prepare a place for you. *I will come again, and receive you unto Myself* (John 14:3). Heaven is where Christ is now. There we will be. This is heaven's greatest honor conferred on mortals. This belongs to us. This is the order of these great events:

- The Lord's descent from heaven.
- The dead in Christ raised.
- The living believers changed.
- The whole company caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

## Christ's Coming—A Challenge To Holy Living

(Read 1 Thessalonians 5)

Christ's second coming will be like the coming of a thief in the night or like the flood in Noah's time. The world will know nothing of His return. They scoff at the idea. But Jesus said there would be "signs" before His coming so that watchful believers may know when the time is drawing near. Over and over again Jesus had told them that His coming would be as a thief in the night. (Matt. 24:36,42; 25:13; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:40; 21:25-35) He warned His disciples to be ever on the watch. This should be their duty and their attitude. Christians need have no fear of that glorious day.

Don't fix dates! We should live watchful lives. We should not live lives of sleepy indulgence but of wakeful watching. (1 Thess. 5:6) The hope of Christ's coming does not mean a life of idleness. Activity should be the theme of our lives as we find it in this chapter.

Have you ever thought of Paul as a human example of what it means to follow Christ? Paul could challenge a critical examination of his record as a Christian. Paul had a brilliant mind, and a highly cultured one. We are apt to say, "How hardly shall a brainy man remain loyal to his Maker!" But Paul humbly prostrated his wonderful intellect at the feet of his Master. The only explanation of such a life is that it was entirely yielded to Christ. You can't be perfect in this life, young people. But there is one thing you can do one hundred per cent. It is what Paul did. You can give yourselves totally and without reserve to the Master.

*Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.* (Luke 12:40) Every morning when we rise we should say to ourselves, *Be ye ready for your Lord's return, for He may come today.* Every night our closing question should be, *Would I be ready for my Lord if He should come before I wake?* (1 Thess. 3:12,13) Don't live to be ready to die, but live that you may be ready for Christ's coming! (5:4-8)

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

# Let's Look At 2 Thessalonians

## *2 Thessalonians Portrays Jesus Christ, Our Returning Lord*

Chapter 15 from *A Look at the New Testament* by Henrietta Mears<sup>4</sup>

The second coming of Christ is mentioned 318 times in 260 chapters of the New Testament. From this we see how important this subject is. The “coming of Christ” should be cleared up a bit in our minds. One day, Christ will come to take away His bride, the Church. He will not be seen of the world at that time, but those who are His, including the dead in Christ, shall be “caught up” to meet Him. This is the teaching of 1 Thessalonians. After the tribulation for those left on the earth, Christ will appear to the world, with His Church, to establish His throne upon the earth.

This second letter was written almost immediately after 1 Thessalonians. In addition to their trials and persecutions, the Thessalonian Christians were “shaken in mind” and “troubled” by deceivers who made some believe that they were already passing through the great tribulation and that *the day of the Lord was already here*. Paul tries to clear up the difficulty. Today, when war is threatening and sorrow seems to cover the earth, people think that they are in the end “tribulation” time, which Christ said would come. This second epistle to the Thessalonians is good for all to read, so that these errors in our thinking shall be cleared up.

The church at Thessalonica was carried away with the expectation of Christ’s glorious return. Who can help but be thrilled when he thinks about His triumphant coming? But we must keep our feet on the ground. We haven’t been given wings yet! We must mix calm thought with a burning hope. We must work while we wait, and pray as we watch, for there is much to do while Christ tarries.

The message here is something like our Lord’s word to His disciples in Acts 1. You remember their eager question, *Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom?* Leave that with the Father, Jesus in effect replied. Do your day’s work and wait. The kingdom is coming. That is true and glory will attend it. Therefore, keep watching and work while you wait.

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<sup>4</sup> Used by permission.

# Christ's Coming—Comfort In Persecution

(Read 2 Thessalonians 1)

Many believe that Christ will not come to set up His kingdom till all the world is converted, but verses 7-12 of this first chapter seem to destroy this view. Read them carefully and you will find that the thing emphasized is that the coming of the Lord will be a terror for the disobedient. *When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*

The world has never seen our Lord Jesus since it crucified Him. He has been hidden from their view. But one day He will appear to the whole world. In 1 Thessalonians, chapter four, Paul says that at first Christ will descend from heaven and, with the shout of the archangel, the Church will be caught away to be forever with the Lord. At that time He will be seen only by His own. He is coming for His Church. Paul says, *For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord* (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Will you be among those whom Christ will catch up?

Here in 2 Thessalonians, Paul says He will appear to the world with the *angels of His power in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.* (1:7, 8) First He comes to take His own out of this world. They will be caught up to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17) Then He appears for judgment. (Jude 15) *For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt. 25:29-30). Christ is coming in the air for His saints, and later He is coming to the earth with His saints to set up His kingdom. *When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.* (Matt. 25:31) Then *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* (Hab. 2:14).

# Christ's Coming—Instructions For Those In Confusion

(Read 2 Thessalonians 2)

The Thessalonian Christians were suffering great persecution, and some of them had begun to think that they were passing through “the great tribulation” of which Christ spoke as the terrible time which should precede His coming and that the day of the Lord was already present. They were disturbed about the time of the Lord's coming and were entertaining wrong views as to the nearness of His return. This was unsettling their lives. The reason for this was that a forged letter and report, both supposed to have come from the apostle Paul, had confused the church and added fuel to the fire. (2 Thess. 2:2) Jesus had told the disciples, *Take heed that no man lead you astray* (Matt. 24:4, A.R.V.).

The coming again of Christ to the earth is the great future event that the Church has looked forward to since Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives and the two men in white apparel said that this same Jesus would so come in like manner as He went into heaven. (See Acts 1:11.) Because of its greatness it has overshadowed all other events. It is “at hand” because it looms so big.

One day we traveled up the western highway to Mount Rainier. The morning of the day we arrived the air was clear. The vision was perfect. There was the majestic snow-covered mountain. It

seemed so near that it would only be a few minutes until we would be climbing up its side. We ate our breakfast and started off in anticipation. We rode on and there it was, but we hadn't reached it. Every once in a while a low hill and a turn in the road would cut it off from our vision, but lo, again it would appear in all its glory. But we weren't there yet. For three hours we traveled. There it was the greatest thing on our horizon. Other things fell into insignificance in proportion to its grandeur and importance. Lunch time came and still we had not arrived, but it kept beckoning us on. Finally it was upon us. We were there! This is a picture of Christ's coming again in glory. It has loomed big on the horizon of every Christian's life since the early Church. It is the "blessed hope" of the Church. His coming is "at hand" because it is the greatest future event, but it may not be immediate because God must finish His plan before Christ comes.

This scene deals with the manner of Christ's coming—the time and the place. Do not be anxious. God will take care of His own program of the ages. But know this—the *Man of Sin must be revealed* first, and the *mystery of iniquity* work itself out.

Have you ever visited the great Hoover Dam and viewed the ponderous wall holding back millions of acre-feet of water by its mighty presence? Can you imagine the destruction and awful disaster that would occur if all at once a great power would lift that wall and allow the waters which were piled up and restrained by its presence, to dash down over the country below, carrying houses and bridges, men and women, to a terrible destruction and death? This is what occurred in 1927 when the St. Francis Dam in California gave way, and for miles and miles there was nothing but cataclysm and catastrophe.

This gives you a little idea of what will happen to this old world when all the Christians, who are God's wall of righteousness which He has built to hold back the forces of evil from doing their deadliest deeds, are caught away—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. There will be nothing left to hold back the wickedness of men. Then there will be an awful revelation of the real sin in the world, when there is no hindering by good men and women. Then the sin of man will appear in the Man of Sin, or "that wicked one" whom we call the Antichrist. *His coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.* (2:8,9) Wickedness is already at work, in secret, but the Holy Spirit at present restrains it somewhat, but when He is removed the wickedness incarnate in the Man of Sin will appear. This Man of Sin, Christ will destroy by the breath of His lips when He comes in power and great glory. For at the coming of the Lord there will be great activity on the part of Satan. He will perform deceiving miracles. He will delude those who have never received Christ or loved the truth. (2 Thess. 2:11)

The Man of Sin is the same as the Antichrist spoken of by Daniel the prophet, and by the Lord in Matthew 24:23,24. In Revelation 13:1 John tells about him.

The Antichrist is a counterfeit Christ. Satan in a last desperate effort will try to imitate Christ. The world would not have God's Man; now they must have Satan's man.

<b>THE ANTICHRIST</b>	
<b>"Christ's Counterfeit"</b>	
Will establish himself in Jerusalem.....	Matt. 24:15
Will make war with the saints .....	.Rev. 13:7
Will be worshiped as God .....	2 Thess. 2:4
Will do signs and lying wonders .....	2 Thess. 2:9
Will work for only three and a half years.....	Rev. 13:5,6
Will be cast into the lake of fire at Christ's coming.....	Rev. 19:20

Does Paul teach that the world is getting better? Is it true that the preaching of the Gospel is going to win the whole world for Christ? If so, has the Gospel failed? What is God's plan for this present age?

The Gospel has not failed. It is accomplishing just what Christ intended it should accomplish—the gathering out of the world of a people for His Name, the Church. On the other hand, there is this “mystery of lawlessness” working (2:7), a development of anarchy among all classes of society. Don’t be disheartened. Paul gives us a picture of the state of the world at the close of this age when Christ shall come again. There will be a great departure from the faith. In fact Christ says when He comes shall He find faith on the earth. This is the picture of the Church preceding Christ’s return—a falling away, a great apostasy. Does Christ really mean this? We should judge so from His description of the end days in Matthew 24:1-14, 36-42.

When Christ returns, He will find Antichrist (the Man of Sin) carrying out his satanic plans. From the description of the Man of Sin in the Scriptures and his diabolical role of mighty works and lying wonders, we do not see how that and the millennial glory could exist together.

It is just as God said it would be. Indeed, the darkest clouds that are gathering are but harbingers of the golden day that is surely coming, when our Lord Himself shall return to take up the reins of government.

### **Before “The Day Of The Lord’s Judgment”**

The Lord’s coming will be “sudden” but sudden does not necessarily mean “immediate.” We are to wait anxiously for this time when the Lord will gather His children to Himself. Christ tells us always to be ready. The “day of the Lord” is “at hand” but it will not come until certain things take place. God always follows out a program. Paul warns the people against confusing the hope of Christ’s coming for His Church, with the day of the Lord’s judgment. Before this “day of the Lord’s judgment,” the following things must happen:

#### **A Great Falling Away from the Faith**

How true this is, in the day in which we are living! People are leaving *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 3), and *denying the Lord that bought them* with His own precious blood (2 Peter 2:1), and crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting Him to shame (Heb. 6:6). The world acknowledges Christ to be a teacher, but not the Saviour. *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* (Matt. 24:12) These are perilous times. Scoffers will arise and scoff at the idea of Christ’s coming.

#### **The “Lawless One” Must Be Revealed**

He will be revealed before Christ appears to the world. But not until the Lord has caught up His own will the lawless one come into public view. (2:8) This “lawless one” is described in 2:4. He will oppose God; he has the title “Antichrist.”

#### **The Holy Spirit Is Taken Away. The “Man of Sin” Will Open His Awful Campaign Against the Lord**

When Christ comes, He will find Antichrist ruling with all power and signs and lying wonders. It will be a time marked with strong delusions. This is Paul’s prediction of the Antichrist. “The sin of man has its final outcome in the Man of Sin.” Read Matthew 24:24. He will be destroyed by Christ.

# Christ's Coming—Practical Preparation In Service

(Read 2 Thessalonians 3)

The time of this glorious event is to be left with God. The delay in the Lord's coming gives us real opportunities for service. There are two wrong views of the Lord's coming that must be watched. Either we become restless and troubled because of having to wait so long, or grow idle because we know that when He comes, He will right every wrong and overthrow iniquity. But both of these attitudes are wrong. We are not just to stand and wait, but rather have "our loins girded" for service, making ready for the glorious day when He shall come. Let us not abandon the work that Christ has given us to do and become engaged in material things.

Paul gives some instructions to the Thessalonians:

- Stand fast—don't be influenced by false teaching.
- Hold that which you have been taught—don't lose any of your foundation truth.
- Comfort your hearts.
- Establish yourselves in every good word and work.

Then Paul asks for their prayers. (3:1) His heart was burdened and he needed their fellowship. He had great confidence in their faith.

The hope of Christ's coming stimulates without exciting; sobers without depressing. It is a balancing doctrine.

Some thought, because Christ was coming, they would just withdraw from business and not work, claiming the right to be supported by the brethren who had money. Paul was very drastic in his dealing with these lazy fellows. The attitude on the part of these men was absolutely wrong, and he asked them to look to him for an example. He never ceased to labor while he was preaching to them. He laid down a great principle of life that *if any man will not work, neither shall he eat*. Any view of Christianity that makes a man neglect his work for his livelihood is not of God. Although Paul always advocated charity toward those who were in need, and spent much time in taking up offerings for the poor, yet he was very severe in condemning the able-bodied fellow who could but would not work. He forbade the Church to support these folks, and even urged them to withdraw fellowship from them. God never makes a beggar out of anyone, nor does He ever bless laziness.

