

A Survey of the Book of I Thessalonians

TEACHER: RAY REYNOLDS

Author:

Paul, the apostle (**I Thessalonians 1:1**), formerly Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 8-9**) identifies himself as the author of this letter. He uses Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy to aid him with the writing. The early church unanimously accepted it as from Paul and quoted it often.

Date:

It is generally accepted that Paul wrote it around 49-51 AD in the city of Corinth. There is little doubt that this letter was one of the earliest letters that Paul wrote, and it may be the first, depending on the date of Galatians. It was written during the second missionary journey when he was accompanied by Silas (**Acts 15:22**) and just a few months after they had established the congregation in Thessalonica (**Acts 17:1-9**).

The book of Acts reveals that the missionaries reasoned with those in the synagogue for three Sabbaths before having success. They probably only stayed in Thessalonica for a few months and then went on to Berea (**Acts 17:10**), Athens (**Acts 17:15**), and eventually Corinth (**Acts 18:1**). While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to visit the brethren in Thessalonica and then met up with him in Corinth where he got the report and then wrote this letter.

Theme:

This letter is about preparing for the second coming of Jesus. Since Paul's stay in Thessalonica was brief he didn't have time to describe all the aspects of living a holy life and how to anticipate for the Lord's coming. The church was still struggling with immorality and weak faith.

The latter part of this letter has been the subject of much study and debate. Paul, while attempting to encourage the brethren (**I Thessalonians 4:18**), apparently he opened up a "can of worms" regarding the end times and would have to clarify more in a second letter. In this first letter he tells of the resurrection of the righteous dead and the "changing" of those alive when Christ comes again (**I Thessalonians 4:13ff**). Paul does not address when this would take place, except to give the impression it would happen suddenly. He taught that Christ would come as a "thief in the night" (**I Thessalonians 5:2**) but no one knew when this would happen (**Matthew 24:36, 25:13**).

Audience:

The church of Thessalonica was the intended audience. Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. Its inhabitants were Roman citizens who were ruled by officials known as "politarchs" (**Acts 17:6-8**). Remember that Paul was called to do missions here. Aristarchus and Secundus (of Thessalonica) were believers that labored with him (**Acts 20:4, 27:2**).

Key Verses:

I Thessalonians 1:2, 1:5, 2:6-7, 2:12, 3:9-10, 3:13, 4:3, 4:11, 4:13-18, 5:2-6, 5:9, 5:17-19

Outline:

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| I. Commendation for Faithfulness (1:1-10) | IV. Caution About the 2 nd Coming (4:13-5:11) |
| II. Counseling for Persecution (2:1-20) | V. Concluding Exhortations (5:12-28) |
| III. Concern for the Future (3:1-4:12) | |

A Survey of the Book of II Thessalonians

TEACHER: RAY REYNOLDS

Author:

Paul, the apostle (**II Thessalonians 1:1**), formerly Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 8-9**) identifies himself as the author of this letter. He uses Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy to aid him with the writing, like he did in the first letter. The early church unanimously accepted it as from Paul and quoted it often.

Date:

It is generally accepted that Paul wrote it around 50-51 AD in the city of Corinth. It was written as a follow-up letter to clarify some things mentioned in the first letter and to help ease the suffering of the saints. It was written during the second missionary journey when he was accompanied by Silas and Timothy in Corinth (**Acts 18**).

Theme:

This letter is about the judgment of God. He jumps right into subject in the first chapter and then addresses some correspondence between himself and the Thessalonians (**II Thessalonians 2:1**). Paul must have been very concerned with the brethren as he describes the imminent apostasy or “falling away” (**II Thessalonians 2:7, I Timothy 4:1**) that restrained the work and negated his own preaching and teaching.

Paul points out that the real enemy of the faith is the lawless one, and he would be revealed in their suffering (**II Thessalonians 2:8-10**). This activity of the “lawless one” could be the protagonists in the Jewish war against the Romans when the Temple was destroyed (70 AD). It could also be referring to the Roman emperors in general or specifically Nero (54–64 AD) and Domitian (96 AD). He also reveals that miraculous activity from the “man of sin” proves that even Satan and his angels can do amazing things. In fact, the Old Testament and the New Testament affirm that it is not just God’s people who can work miracles or participate in the supernatural.

Audience:

The church of Thessalonica was the intended audience. Paul intended for them to prepare for the “day of the Lord” (**II Thessalonians 2:2**) which is an Old Testament expression first described in **Amos 5:18-20**. It is a day of darkness and calamity. He encourages the church to be prepared for a day like this when Jesus would return (**II Thessalonians 2:8**). There have been many “days of the Lord” in history and one need not apply this expression exclusively to the second coming of Christ (**Joel 2 & Acts 2**). This great tribulation may have taken place in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (70 AD), rather than the end of the world (**Matthew 24:15-35**). Clearly, Paul anticipated that these people would see a fulfillment of this prophesy in their lifetime.

Key Verses:

II Thessalonians 1:3, 1:6, 1:11, 2:1-3, 2:7-8, 2:13, 3:1, 3:6, 3:10-11, 3:14-15

Outline:

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|---|--|
| I. God Will Bring Judgment (1:1-12) | IV. God Will Remain Faithful (3:1-5) |
| II. God Will Send Christ (2:1-12) | V. God Will Discipline His People (3:6-15) |
| III. God Will Reward the Faithful (2:13-17) | VI. Concluding Remarks (3:16-18) |

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