

“Living in the Light of His Return”

A Study in First & Second Thessalonians

Introduction

Paul established the church of Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. Paul mentions that he spent three sabbaths with them, teaching in their synagogues. Many Jews and Gentiles were converted to the faith during Paul’s stay and the church of Thessalonica was formed.

Paul left Thessalonica when an angry mob of Jews who were opposed to the Gospel stirred up a riot and Paul was secretly sent away by night to safety in Berea, along with Silas and Timothy. His stay in Berea was short. The opposing Jews from Thessalonica, having learned that he was preaching the Gospel in Berea, came there to stir up the city. From Berea Paul and his companions were put on a ship and sent to Athens.

After being in Athens only a short while, Paul became concerned for the new church in Thessalonica and felt a great urgency to check in on them to find out the state of the new church. Knowing there was a danger of false teachers infiltrating the church, he sent Timothy back to minister to these new believers and to bring back news to Paul of how they were doing. Paul was relieved to hear a good report from Timothy on the progress they had made. Along with the good report, Timothy also brought back some questions and concerns that this newly formed church had, which prompted Paul to write this letter to them.

Written in Corinth, a city of Athens, this letter is believed to be one of the first of Paul’s letters to the churches, written only months after Paul had left Thessalonica, around AD 50-51. This letter was a letter of encouragement for them to continue to grow in godliness, focusing on the expectation of Christ’s return as the motivation for them to **live in the light of that expectation**. This was of special importance due to the persecution the church was suffering from the opposers of the Gospel.

Paul also wanted to address in this letter the questions and concerns they had and to correct the misconceptions and misinformation that had been circulating concerning Christ’s second coming, along with misinformation about himself and his fellow missionaries being perpetrated by critics of Paul and the Gospel. Along with that, Paul also wanted to give them further instructions that would contribute to their spiritual growth.

Surprisingly, Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians was written shortly after the first. The new church, still suffering under persecution and a lot of misunderstanding

concerning the events leading up to Christ's return, Paul focusses on making clear to them the things that must take place before Christ's coming and to encourage their hearts in the salvation God had purchased for them, urging them to live a life of godliness and good deeds as they patiently await His return and the rapture of the church.

These letters to the Thessalonians remind us that we are called, as believers, to **live a life set apart for Him**, especially as the days grow spiritually darker and we see a world around us growing more hostile to the truth of the Gospel every day. We often wonder what God's will for us is. Paul tells us in **1 Thessalonians 4:3** that God's will for us is **our sanctification**. It's a work He began in us when we first came to Him in faith, and it's a work He has promised to continue to complete in us. I pray as you go through the study of these letters they encourage you to an **eternal perspective**, to a **growing hunger for His Word**, and a **growing desire to live in the light of His return**.

Please have the first lesson completed when you come to the first study. We strongly encourage you to complete your lesson each week. Don't try to do it all in one sitting but spread it out throughout the week. That will give you more time to glean all that the Lord has for you and to come prepared to share your thoughts in our discussion time.

You will see that within each lesson there are some **DIGGING DEEPER** questions. These are **optional**, for those who want to "dig deeper" and they will not always be a part of the discussion time.

If for some reason you were not able to complete your study, **we want you to come anyway**. I know that you will receive much from the overview and discussion each week and you can always go back to complete the lesson later.

Take a few moments before you begin your time of study in God's Word to ask Him to quiet your mind from all other distractions and open your heart to the things He wants to show you. Take notes as you read, jotting down those things the Lord impresses on your heart. Keeping a study journal is a good way to do this and I encourage you to use one, or you can use the blank sheet at the back of each lesson for that purpose, as well as for taking notes from the overview.

We are so excited that you are joining us in this study, and we look forward to all the Lord wants to speak to our hearts.

*Shawn Van Hook
And the LT Women's Ministry Team*