**Thessalonians Letters – A Bible Study in 1st and 2nd Thessalonians – The Potter’s House 2014**

1st Thessalonians: Chapter 1 and 2

1. Introduction – **1 Thessalonians 1:1-2**

* Do you know where Thessalonica is located? **Acts 16:9-10** It’s modern name is Salonika
* The church at Thessalonica was established by Paul; on the road between Rome and Constantinople
* It was the second stop in his missionary journey toward the west; do you know what was his first stop? **Acts 16:11-12**
* Note the events of his journey to Thessalonica: **Acts 17:1-4, 5-9**
* How long does it say Paul was in the city preaching? Was he a success?
* These two books are called epistles (letters); what are some of the challenges in studying an epistle?

2. **1 Thessalonians Chapter 1** – Testimonies and Reminders

* **1 Thessalonians 1:2-5** – Paul is remembering how quickly these people accepted Christianity!
* To what does Paul give the credit for the success of the missionary work in Thessalonica?
* How does this line up to what Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit? **Acts 1:8**
* **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7, 8-10** – What does he mean here by “in much affliction?”
* In what way has the Church in Thessalonica contributed to the success of the Gospel in Macedonia?
* Verse 10 makes reference to one of the themes of this epistle, what is it? **Luke 21:28, 36**

3. **1 Thessalonians Chapter 2** – Secrets of Gospel Success

* **1 Thessalonians 2:1-3** – What is Paul’s point here? **Acts 16:11-12, 16-19, 20-24**
* Paul is testifying that despite the persecution he suffered in Philippi, he did not hold back when he presented the Gospel in Thessalonica. So he isn’t going to hold back in this epistle either!
* Paul is reminding the Thessalonians about how he behaved when he was evangelizing there as a missionary: **1 Thessalonians 2:4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-12** – What “secrets of his success” did you see in those verses?
* And Paul is reminding the Thessalonians as to what they did so well in receiving the Gospel:

**1 Thessalonians 2:13, 14-16** – What did the Thessalonians do well that we should also do?

* **1 Thessalonians 2:17-20** – Why do you think Paul wanted to return to Thessalonica so eagerly?
* Who is the “we” he is describing in verse 17? **Acts 15:40-41**, **Acts 16:1-5**
* Note the creepy element in verse 18 – What is it? Is Paul just being superstitious?
* What theme does he return to in verse 19?

4. Questions or comments.

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1st Thessalonians: Chapter 3 and 4

1. Introduction – **1 Thessalonians 1:1-2**

* Where Thessalonica is located and what is its modern name?
* Who founded that church and how long did he spend there?
* Before he arrived there, where had he preached and what had happened?
* What was notable about the Thessalonica Church?
* What were some of the things that Paul credited for his successful evangelism in Thessalonica?
* Who hindered Paul and his team from returning to Thessalonica?

2. **1 Thessalonians Chapter 3** – Timothy’s Mission

* **1 Thessalonians 3:1-3** – So who did Paul send to follow up on the Thessalonica church?
* Paul gave Timothy advice for this trip and others like it in his personal epistles to him:
  + - **1 Timothy 4:12-16**, **2 Timothy 2:1-4**, **2 Timothy 4:1-2**
* **1 Thessalonians 3:4-5** – What was Paul’s fear for these Thessalonians? What was one of Timothy’s missions to find out?
* **1 Thessalonians 3:6-8** – And what did Timothy discover about them?
* **1 Thessalonians 3:9-10, 11-13** – Again, as we saw in the last lesson, Paul keeps returning to a theme. What is it? Why do you think is this being emphasized by Paul? **Luke 21:36**

3. **1 Thessalonians Chapter 4** – Sanctification and Resurrection

* **1 Thessalonians 4:1-2** – Does this sound like what Jesus was saying in Luke 21:36?
* All of the epistle so far was to set the stage for this one lesson in being counted worthy for the “Great Escape” at the coming of the Lord – what do Pentecostal Christians call that?
* **1 Thessalonians 4:3-8** – This is similar to Paul’s words in **Ephesians 5:3-6**
* But what idea did Paul add for the Thessalonians in verse 3?
* What is “sanctification?” **Ezekiel 37:28** **John 17:17 Hebrews 10:10**
* According to our text, did Paul consider sanctification to be optional for the believer?
* **1 Thessalonians 4:9, 10, 11, 12** – Identify each rule of conduct that each Thessalonica believer is urged to follow.
* So Paul has given them some “milk of the word” but he intends to share some “meat” – Note how he leads into the next discussion: **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14**
* Paul is reassuring them about some of their church members who have passed away – he is leading them into a discussion about the resurrection at the coming of the Lord:
  + **Matthew 24:31** **John 5:28-29**
* The word “rapture” does not literally appear in the English translation but is from a Latin translation of one of the phrases located in this next scripture:
  + **1 Thessalonians 4:15-18** – can you find it? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Note that last verse also – how does this wonderful truth comfort us?
* So based on this chapter, how does our “sanctification” relate to the Rapture?
* Now the timing of the Rapture will be covered in the next chapter, and the events leading up to it will be discussed in Second Thessalonians.

4. Questions or comments.

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1st Thessalonians Chapter 5

1. Introduction – **1 Thessalonians 1:1-2** – An epistle (letter) of Paul to a church.

* What is our method of studying a verse in an epistle to determine its meaning?
* What is the modern name for Thessalonica? Where is it located?
* Who was sent there to strengthen the church and report back to Paul?
* What is the main topic that Paul wants to address to these Thessalonians?
* How is the Resurrection connected to the return of Christ?
* From what phrase in Chapter 4 do we get the Latin word “Rapturos” (Which gives us our English word, “Rapture”)?

2. Our Blessed Hope

* **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3** – What did Jesus Christ teach about knowing the specific time of His return?
* **Matthew 24:36** – So what is Paul’s point in these first three verses of chapter 5?
* **1 Thessalonians 5:4-6, 7-8** – What does “sons of light and sons of the day” mean? **1 John 1:5-7**
* How can we make sure we are not walking in darkness and unprepared for Christ’s return?
* **Matthew 24:44, 45-47, 48-51** and **Luke 21:34-36**
* **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11** – What is the reassuring promise suggested by this verse?
* We call this idea “the Pre-Tribulation Rapture” – do you know what that means?
* It is also suggested by these verses: **Revelation 3:10, John 14:1-3, Genesis 5:21-24, Jude 14-15**

3. Walking Worthy

* This epistle closes with suggestions to ensure that the Thessalonians are truly living as “sons of light and sons of the day” and ready for the return of Christ. Consider the rest of this chapter and your own worthiness to escape all that will come upon the earth according to these prophecies.
* **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** – What is this all about? **1 Timothy 5:17-20**
* Read and explain each verse: **1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, 16, 17-18, 19-20, 21, 22**
* Did you notice in our studies that most of the epistles in the New Testament have lists of “commandments” for believers to pattern their life after?
* How does this fit in with modern “greasy grace” doctrine, “anything goes” Christianity, accusations of legalism, arguments against standards and/or the “you can’t judge me” attitude of so many so-called believers?
* Paul’s closing thought: **1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** – Note how fervently Paul suggests we need to pray that we are “blameless” at the Lord’s return. How does this contrast with modern attitudes?
* **1 Thessalonians 5:25-28**

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2nd Thessalonians Chapter 1

1. Introduction – **2 Thessalonians 1:1-2** – An epistle (letter) of Paul to a church.

* What makes epistles like this one sometimes difficult to understand?
* What is our method of studying a verse in an epistle to determine its meaning?
* Where is Thessalonica located? Who founded it?
* Who was sent there to strengthen the church and report back to Paul?
* What is the main topic that Paul addressed in 1 Thessalonians?
* Where is the word “Rapture” found in the Bible? What is it?
* What were some of the things Paul suggested to the Thessalonians so they could be “Rapture Ready?”
* When will the Rapture take place?

2. **2 Thessalonians Chapter 1** –

* **2 Thessalonians 1:1-2** -- Why Two Letters? Hint: The second was sent *relatively soon after the first.*
* Look at **1 Thessalonians 5:1-2**. How could that phrase caused problems? How might people misuse or misinterpret the teaching about the imminent return of Christ?
* How was the “imminent return of Christ” meant to shape our character? **Luke 21:34-36**
* **2 Thessalonians 1:3-4** – What appears to be the reputation of this church? What are they going through? But Paul considers that a GOOD sign of their worthiness of character: **2 Timothy 3:12**
* Do you remember what Paul’s experience was like in this city? **Acts 17:1-4, 5-7, 8-9, 10**
* Note: Jason is an interesting character. His name is very Greek and he is mentioned as being with Paul in Rome in **Romans 16:21**. Whether he was of Greek or Jewish origin is unclear but he was willing to pay the price for his faith as a relatively new believer!
* Jason is very representative of this church as we read in the next verses: **2 Thessalonians 1:5-6, 7-8**
* Who does Paul seem to be quoting here? **Jude 14-15** – Jude’s was a circular epistle and may have been read by Paul. Do you remember what a “circular epistle” is?
* Paul is referring back to his theme from 1 Thessalonians in verse 7. What was that?
* Christ’s return is a two part Second Coming – first, at the Rapture of the Church (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**), and then, at the Battle of Armageddon (**Revelation 19:11-14, 15-16, 19-21**).
* **2 Thessalonians 1:9-10, 11-12** – The mystery of the church was not revealed in the Old Testament, so Old Testament prophets like Zechariah do not include the Raptured Church in their descriptions of the Messiah’s coming: **Zechariah 12:9-10**
* But in Paul’s mind, verse 10, how does it say Christ will be glorified?
* And how are God’s people glorified according to verse 11? **Ephesians 1:7-10**
* And there is also that reminder, just as in 1 Thessalonians, of the need to be “counted worthy” at Christ’s return. What does that mean?
* Next Week in Chapter 2: Some issues get cleared up about the events leading up to the Rapture.

3. Questions or comments.

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2nd Thessalonians Chapter 2

1. Introduction – **2 Thessalonians 1:1-2** – An epistle (letter) of Paul to a church.

* What was the main theme of Paul’s 1st Letter to the Thessalonians?
* Why might it have been necessary to have followed up the 1st Thessalonians epistle with a second one?
* What doctrinal issue in 1st Thessalonians may have caused some confusion or error at Thessalonica?
* What is the Rapture of the church?
* Why do we who believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture say that the Second Coming is a two part second coming?

2. **2 Thessalonians Chapter 2** – The Great Apostasy and the Lawless One

* **2 Thessalonians 2:1-2** – Paul returns to the great theme of these two epistles which is *what?*
* What does the term “our gathering together to him” mean? Could it mean anything else? **Matthew 24:30-31**
* Why might the church at Thessalonica be troubled as verse 2 suggests? **1 Thessalonians 4:13**
* **2 Thessalonians 2:3** – This is an interesting verse. The term “falling away” is the Greek word, *apostasia*, which means “defection, revolt, apostasy” and is translated in Acts 21:21 as “forsake” as in “to forsake the law of Moses.” This is a religious apostasy – moving away from doctrinal truth.
* What is Paul saying must take place before the Day (of the Lord’s return) comes?
* Do we see any evidence of that taking place today?
* **2 Thessalonians 2:4** -- Who is this “man of sin,” “the son of perdition?”
* Compare to **1 John 2:18-23**. What religious groups have the doctrine described in 1 John 18:22-23?
* The Anti-Christ correlates to the Beast, the ruler of the Beast Kingdom in **Revelation 13:2, 4-6**
* **2 Thessalonians 2:5-7** -- Note verse 7 -- something is holding back the Anti-Christ from assuming his place of power in the earth. Who or what could it be? (Hint: Note the pronoun in Verse 7)
* **2 Thessalonians 2:8-10** – People on the earth will be fooled by this Anti-Christ. But why? What kind of people will be left on the earth after the “Restraining One” is removed? **Revelation 9:20-21**
* If you are a person who “loves a lie” and “hates the Truth” you are destined to be deceived by this “lawless one” who will perform deceiving signs in the earth: **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**
* **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 15-17** – Now compare that to what the Book of Revelation says about this Anti-Christ in **Revelation 13: 7-10** -- Why would Paul close out this 2nd chapter of 2nd Thessalonians with the advice to “comfort your hearts” if this were true?
* Simple, because today’s faithful, doctrinally correct and serving church has a different future than the people who come to faith during the period described in Revelation 13 – **1 Thessalonians 5:9-11** and **Luke 21:36**
* Live for God now and you will escape with the rest of God’s people!

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2nd Thessalonians Chapter 3

1. Introduction – **2 Thessalonians 1:1-2** – An epistle (letter) of Paul to a church.

* What makes epistles like this one sometimes difficult to understand?
* What is our method of studying a verse in an epistle to determine its meaning?
* Where is Thessalonica located? Who founded it?
* What was the main theme of Paul’s 1st Letter to the Thessalonians?
* Why did Paul need to write a second epistle to the Thessalonians so soon after the first? If Paul’s epistles ever seem hard to understand, don’t worry, you are in good company: **2 Peter 3:14-16**
* What do we mean when we talk of a “two part” Second Coming of Christ?
* What does the term “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” mean?
* What must happen in the Church world before the Rapture takes place? Are we seeing evidence of such a thing today?
* Who or what is being restrained by the Holy Spirit/Body of Christ on the earth?

2. **2 Thessalonians Chapter 3** – The Great Apostasy and the Lawless One

* **2 Thessalonians 3:1-2** – Who is Paul referring to in verse 2? **Jude 3-4** **1 John 2:18-19**
* **2 Thessalonians 3:3-5** – Who is the evil one being referred to here? **2 Thessalonians 2:7-8**
* So how does chapter 3, verse 3, when correlated with chapter 2, verse 7-8, support a belief in a “Pre-Tribulation” Rapture?
* **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7-8** – What kind of example is Paul describing in verse 9?
* These disorderly people from verse 6, who are they and what is their problem?
* **2 Thessalonians 3:10-12** – What is the solution? It’s a four letter word that many people do not like!
* Keep in mind - some pastors and evangelists WORK a secular job to help a small church financially; ***but*** being a pastor or evangelist IS a job that deserves a paycheck! **Acts 20:33-35** **1 Corinthians 9:14**
* **2 Thessalonians 3:13-15** – Such a “disorderly” person is merely “out of order” and needs to be peer pressured into fulfilling their obligations – this is a form of mild church discipline -- they may be immature and carnal but they are still considered brethren – ***not*** to be treated as backsliders or “enemies of the cross”
* Contrast these with real problem making rebels such as those Paul is addressing in **Romans 16:17-18** – can you see the difference?
* **2 Thessalonians 3:16-18** – Why does Paul close with such an odd statement in verse 17?
* Can you guess who Silvanus is and why he is with Paul at the writing of this epistle (he is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2)? **1 Peter 5:12**

3. Questions or comments.

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