

SENIOR HIGH Bible Teacher

SPRING QUARTER
March, April, May 2019

For Teachers of Teens Ages 15 Through 17



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The Weeks Ahead

A believer turning from paganism to Christ or accepting the Messiah from a background in Judaism is faced with an entirely new set of truths. Paul spent much of his time in missionary work grounding new believers in the faith. These lessons explore many of those new teachings that he explained to those who had been saved.

For the new Thessalonian believers, everything had become new in Christ. The lessons in the first unit describe how their loyalty had changed from trusting idols to trusting Jesus. The church in Thessalonica had learned of the love of Christ and as a result had developed a love for Him, which extended to the entire body of the faithful, including both Jews and Gentiles. Their behavior had changed as well. While they previously lived for themselves and served worldly desires, they were now living for Christ and seeking His holiness. Paul's teaching had also provided them with a new understanding of eternity. They did not need to worry about what would happen to believers who died. They knew that in Christ they had eternal life and would live forever in the presence of God Himself. These are the truths explained in the first four lessons.

The change that the new believers experienced when they trusted in Christ as Saviour did not stop there; they continued in their spiritual growth. That is the theme of Unit II. When Paul wrote his second epistle to the church in Thessalonica, he was aware that they were facing great persecution. But he was excited to hear of the strength of their faith in the face of that

suffering. They were learning to trust God, and as a result their faith grew stronger. In order to build that faith even more, Paul shared with them the truth concerning God's ultimate triumph over the antichrist in the days to come. Knowing that God would one day punish evildoers helped them determine to keep the faith and continue doing the work of God.

In Unit III, we see how the salvation and growth of the believers came directly from their acceptance of the gospel. The gospel is clearly explained as the work that Christ accomplished in His death and resurrection. Those who put faith in His finished work are saved by the grace of God. Paul had learned the truth of the gospel from Christ Himself, then spent three years in the desert after his conversion (Gal. 1:12, 15-18). The false teachers who claimed that Paul taught a different gospel from the other apostles had no basis on which to make that claim. We learn that the gospel Paul preached agreed perfectly with what had been foretold by the Old Testament prophets. It completely fulfilled the Law of Moses. The law demonstrates the necessity of grace by showing that all people fall short of God's holiness. Every person needs a Saviour because every person is a sinner.

Only through Christ can a person become a member of the family of God. And once a person has trusted in Christ, it is through His power and the indwelling Holy Spirit that they can then live a life of good works that is pleasing to God.

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of the Incorporated Trustees of the Gospel Worker Society, Union Gospel Press Division. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and yieldedness to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

End Times

Paul taught the church in Thessalonica that Christ would return to the earth, and they believed it. But they were worried that those who had already died might miss out on the blessings of the Second Coming. In order to prepare them for God's plans for the future, Paul instructed them in what is now called eschatology. The term does not occur in the Bible, but it is a theological term that refers to the last things or final events of the age. An outline of those events will be of great benefit in understanding the truth Paul discusses in the two letters to the Thessalonians.

The first event on God's calendar for the end times is the rapture of the church. Paul's discussion of the rapture comes in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Christ will return, and those who have already died in Christ will be resurrected. Christians who are still living will be caught up in the air along with those who have come out of their graves. This truth provided great comfort to the Thessalonians because they now knew that their loved ones who had already died would join them in the rapture. Paul taught them that this phase of the second coming of Christ was imminent. Nothing else needed to happen before Christ returned to claim His own. Even though many years might pass before it took place, they could anticipate His return at any moment.

First Corinthians 15:51-54 explains the changes which will take place at that time. There will be a change from death to life through resurrection. All believers will experience a change from corruption to incorruption be-

cause sin will no longer be present in our glorified bodies. We will also become immortal. Life with Christ in heaven will never end but will last for all eternity.

Following the rapture of the church, those still on earth will enter a period of seven years known as the Great Tribulation. This period of time is discussed in detail in Revelation 6—19. The earth and all those who have rejected the Son of God will face the judgment of God. The tribulation begins with a covenant signed between Israel and the antichrist. Paul told the Thessalonians about the antichrist in II Thessalonians 2:8-12. He will ascend to power by making this treaty with the people of Israel and will eventually gain political power over the entire world. When his power is consolidated, he will break the covenant with the Jews and begin to persecute them. This persecution will begin the period known as the time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Jer. 30:10-11; Dan. 12:1).

Through the preaching of God's two witnesses (Rev. 11:3), a great number of people will come to Christ, including many from among the Jews. God will protect them from the attacks of the antichrist while at the same time pouring out His wrath on those who rebel against Him. This time period is sometimes called the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan. 9:27). Jesus gave instruction concerning the tribulation in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24). Several of the Old Testament prophets also wrote about the tribulation and its events (cf. Zech. 13:8-9).

The tribulation will end with the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:19-21). Jesus Christ will return as King and defeat the armies of the antichrist in a final battle. He will descend to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-4) as King of kings and Lord of lords. The antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire. Satan will be bound for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). After the battle the judgment of the nations will take place (Matt. 25:31-33). Those who were saved during the tribulation period will take their place with the saints in heaven. Those who followed the antichrist, taking his mark and accepting his leadership, will join him in the lake of fire. God will be victorious over His enemies.

With Christ as King, the millennial kingdom will be set up on the earth (Zech. 14:9-11). The saints of all ages will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4) The millennium will be a time of universal peace on earth, a time in which Satan is bound and King Jesus reigns in righteousness and holiness. At the beginning of the millennium all those living on earth will be believers who have turned to Christ during the tribulation since all others will have been judged and cast into the lake of fire. During the millennium, children will be born and some of them will exercise their free will by refusing to accept Christ. When Satan is released for a time at the end of the one thousand years, he will lead those unbelievers in a final rebellion against the King (vss. 7-10).

The millennium will further demonstrate that even in a perfect environment where peace and righteousness reign, it is impossible for mankind to attain salvation without a Saviour. All men are born in sin, and that sin nature will rebel against God even when Satan is not there to tempt them (Jas. 1:14). The only way of salvation in any age is through

faith in the Son of God. He is the only source of hope.

When Satan deceives the nations and leads them into the final battle, he is quickly defeated by Christ and cast into hell, a place prepared for him and his evil angels (Matt. 25:41). Then the unsaved dead of all ages are resurrected to face the Great White Throne, judgment. At that time they will be judged on the basis of whether or not their names are written in the book of life (Rev. 20:15). Those who have trusted in Christ are written in the book of life, so those who are not in it will be condemned. After judgment from a righteous God, they will join Satan and his evil angels in hell to endure eternal punishment.

After the judgment of the Great White Throne, the world enters into the eternal state (21:1). The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth, and the entire universe enters into the blessing of knowing the immediate presence of God Himself (vss. 2-3). All the descriptions of heaven given in Scripture will be fulfilled. The place that God has prepared for us will be the eternal dwelling place of the saints. The new heaven and the new earth will be our home as we enjoy the privilege of living in the light of the Son of God.

Living eternally as part of God's family fulfills the blessing that God promised to the world through the seed of Abraham. The death and resurrection of Christ made possible our acceptance into God's family and assures us of a home with Him forever. Understanding that doctrine brought great comfort and joy to the hearts of the Thessalonians and continues to provide assurance to those who are living in Christ today. We do not need to fear the future because God is the one who is in control. What a comfort this is!

Scripture Lesson Text

1 THESS. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

NOTES

A New Loyalty

Lesson Text: I Thessalonians 1:1-10

Related Scriptures: Acts 17:1-4; Romans 6:17-23;
I Corinthians 2:1-5; Ephesians 2:1-13

TIME: A.D. 51

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—“They themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (I Thessalonians 1:9).

Studying the Text

The Apostle Paul arrived in the city of Thessalonica soon after leaving Philippi (cf. Acts 16:12; 17:1). Thessalonica served as the capital of Macedonia and had become its largest city. While there, the impact of Paul’s ministry resulted in the formation of a local church where people formed a strong loyalty to the Person of Jesus Christ. They were experiencing dramatic spiritual growth because of the change that had taken place in their lives through Paul’s message of the gospel.

THE EVIDENCE OF LOYALTY—

I Thess. 1:1-4

Paul made it very clear from the beginning that the loyalty of the church in Thessalonica was to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to him. He, Silas, and Timothy had ministered to the city, and the church was a result of their ministry. But the faith of those in the church was in God and His Son. God was the source of the grace that provided salvation. The work of Christ was the source of their peace with God; it was made possible by His substitutionary death, which reconciled them to the Father.

When Paul prayed to God for the church, it took the form of thanksgiving. He loved these people and was thankful for the transformation that had taken place through his ministry of the gospel. But he knew that the praise for that transformation needed to be directed toward God, who had done the work of grace in their lives. Because of what God had done, Paul could offer constant praise for the church in Thessalonica. He rejoiced in their salvation, which only God had made possible for them through Jesus Christ.

Paul’s continual rejoicing when he remembered and prayed for the church in Thessalonica was spurred by the progress he had seen in their lives as a result of the gospel. He had been there in the past when the gospel first produced their faith. He had also heard of their progress since then as they labored for God. He had hope for their future development as they continued to trust in the promises of God.

Their “work of faith” (vs. 3) reminded Paul of the way the Thessalonians responded to the good news concerning Christ. They chose to place their faith in the finished work of Christ on