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*This is a self-study course
designed to help you discover
for yourself, from the Bible,
some important basic truths about
the second coming of Christ.*

how to study the lesson

1. Try to find a quiet spot free from distractions and noise.
2. Read the entire Scripture lesson; read it several times to help you absorb its content.
3. Read each question carefully. Then look up the Scripture reference given after each question. Make sure you have found the correct Scripture passage. For example, sometimes you may find yourself looking up JOHN 1:1 instead of I JOHN 1:1.
4. Answer the question from the appropriate Bible passage. Write, in your own words, a phrase or sentence to answer the question. In questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” always give the reason for your answer . . . “Yes, because. . . .”
5. If possible, keep a dictionary handy in order to look up words you don’t understand.

6. Pray for God's help. You *need* God's help in order to understand what you study in the Bible. PSALM 119:18 would be an appropriate verse for you to take to God in prayer.

7. *Class teachers using this course for group study will find some helpful suggestions on page 47.*

how to take the self-check tests

Each lesson is concluded with a test designed to help you evaluate what you have learned.

1. Review the lesson carefully in the light of the self-check test questions.

2. If there are any questions in the self-check test you cannot answer, perhaps you have written into your lesson the wrong answer from your Bible. Go over your work carefully to make sure you have filled in the blanks correctly.

3. When you think you are ready to take the self-check test, do so without looking up the answers.

4. Check your answers to the self-check test carefully with the answer key given on page 48.

5. If you have any questions wrong, your answer key will tell you where to find the correct answer in your lesson. Go back and locate the right answers. Learn by your mistakes!

apply what you have learned to your own life

In this connection, read carefully JAMES 1:22-25. It is only as you apply your lessons to your own life that you will really grow in grace and increase in the knowledge of God.



Introduction to The Thessalonian Epistles

Theme of I Thessalonians

1. The Christian and the Lord's return: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven" (1:9, 10). This refers to the time when all believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This event is sometimes called "the Rapture."

Theme of II Thessalonians

2. "The day of the Lord": "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God. . . . He shall come to be glorified in his saints . . . in that day" (1:7-10). This event should not be confused with the Rapture. The Lord first comes *for* His Church at the Rapture and later comes *with* His Church to establish His 1000 year reign on the earth.

3. Between these two phases of the second coming of Christ is the seventieth "week" of Daniel (DANIEL 9:27), called by the Lord Jesus the "great tribulation" (MATTHEW 24:8, 21).

The writer and two of his companions

4. Does Paul indicate that he wrote these epistles, and that Silvanus and Timotheus (or Timothy) were only co-laborers with him in Thessalonica? (Read the following verses; then answer *Yes* or *No*.)

I THESSALONIANS 1:1; 2:18; 3:5; 5:27; II THESSALONIANS 1:1; 3:17

5. By what name is Silvanus called in the following verses?

ACTS 15:22, 27, 32, 40; 16:25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14; 18:5 _____

These passages show that Silas was a Jew, a leader in the Jerusalem church and a companion of Paul on his second missionary journey. ("Silvanus" is the Latin form.)

6. Who joined Paul and Silas at Lystra?

ACTS 16:1-3 _____

7. Evidently Paul had led Timothy to Christ during his first missionary journey. (See ACTS 14:6-23; I TIMOTHY 1:2.) Twelve years later he addressed Timothy as a youth (I TIMOTHY 4:12).

8. Because Silas and Timothy labored with Paul in Thessalonica (ACTS 17:1-10), it was of special interest to the believers there that the apostle included them in his greetings (I THESSALONIANS 1:1; II THESSALONIANS 1:1).

The beginning of the church at Thessalonica

9. How many Sabbath days did Paul teach from the Old Testament in the synagogue at Thessalonica?

ACTS 17:2 _____

10. What did he prove from these "scriptures"?

ACTS 17:3 _____

11. Some of the Jews believed, as well as "a great multitude" of devout Greeks, that is, Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith (ACTS 17:4). Still others "turned to God from idols" (I THESSALONIANS 1:9). They were evidently Gentiles. This was the beginning of the Thessalonian church.

12. Thessalonica was a strategic, commercial city in Macedonia. Many Jews as well as Greeks, Romans and Orientals were included in the population. (You will find the site on the map today, with the modern name, Salonika.)

13. When unbelieving Jews drove the missionaries out of Thessalonica and Berea, to what city did Paul go?

ACTS 17:15 _____

14. There he waited for whom to join him?

ACTS 17:15, 16 _____

The occasion for the Thessalonian epistles

15. Since Paul could not return to Thessalonica as he so earnestly wanted to do, whom did he send from Athens to establish and comfort the Thessalonian believers?

I THESSALONIANS 3:1, 2; compare 2:18; 3:10 _____

16. Meanwhile, to what city did Paul go after he left Athens?

ACTS 18:1 _____

17. How long did Paul stay in Corinth?

ACTS 18:11 _____

18. When Timothy returned to Paul in Corinth, what report did he give of the Thessalonian Christians?

I THESSALONIANS 3:6 _____

19. Timothy's report led Paul to write I Thessalonians, during his stay in Corinth. It is the earliest of his epistles, written about A.D. 52 or 53.

20. II Thessalonians was written a few months later in Corinth. It has been suggested that when the bearer of I Thessalonians returned with his report, the apostle probably wrote the second epistle.

21. Meanwhile, enemies of Christ and His servant, Paul, had disturbed the Thessalonian church with false doctrine concerning the return of the Lord Jesus, at the same time trying to influence these believers against the apostle. Someone had evidently forged Paul's name to a letter (II THESSALONIANS 2:2) that told the young converts they were in the great tribulation, which will be during that period described by the Old Testament prophets as "the day of the LORD." (See, for example, JOEL 2:1.) In II THESSALONIANS 2:2, "the day of Christ" should be translated "the day of the Lord." "The day of Christ" refers to the Rapture of believers (I CORINTHIANS 1:7, 8; PHILIPPIANS 1:6, 10; 2:16). The "day of Christ" is a time of joy. The "day of the LORD" is a time of judgment. The first has to do with Christ's Rapture of His Church, the second with His rupture of the empire of Antichrist and His own reign on earth.

22. In this course the capitalization in the King James Version is used: "the day of the LORD" (Jehovah) in Old Testament quotations; "the day of the Lord" in quotations from the New Testament.

23. What hope did Paul mention to assure the Thessalonian Christians that they were *not* in the great tribulation?

II THESSALONIANS 2:1 _____

The purpose of the Thessalonian epistles

24. In view of these circumstances, as well as other facts set forth in these two letters, the purpose of the Holy Spirit in guiding Paul to write the Thessalonian epistles is very evident. It was (a) to confirm the young believers in the faith, (b) to exhort them to go on to victory in the face of persecution, and (c) to correct certain errors that had arisen among them, as well as (d) to teach them what God had revealed concerning the Lord's return.

check-up time No. 1

You have just studied some important truths about the background of the Thessalonian epistles. Review your study by rereading the questions and your written answers. If you aren't sure of an answer, reread the Scripture portion given to see if you can find the answer. Then take this test to see how well you understand important truths you have studied.

In the right-hand margin write "True" or "False" after each of the following statements.

1. The Thessalonian epistles were written by Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus. _____
2. Silas and Silvanus were two different people. _____
3. When in Thessalonica founding the church there, Paul preached in the synagogue on three Sabbath days. _____
4. Like many other ancient cities, Thessalonica is now extinct. _____
5. Hindered from returning to Thessalonica, Paul sent Timothy to help ground and establish the church. _____
6. I and II Thessalonians were the last epistles Paul wrote. _____
7. The "day of Christ" and the "day of the LORD" are the same. _____
8. The Thessalonians were being troubled. _____
9. II Thessalonians was written several years after I Thessalonians. _____
10. The basic theme of I and II Thessalonians is the Lord's return. _____

Turn to page 48 and check your answers.