

First & Second Thessalonians

# Class Schedule

Lesson	Date	Title	Text	Teacher
1	S 10/27	Founding of the Church in Thessalonica	Acts 16:6-10, 17:1-15	Grant
2	W 10/30	Introduction & Literary Features	1 Thessalonians OR 2 Thessalonians	Grant
3	S 11/3	Thanksgiving for Progress of the Church	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10	Grant
4	W 11/6	Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica	1 Thessalonians 2:1-16	Grant
5	S 11/10	Re-Establishing Contact	1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13	Phillip
6	W 11/13	Exhortation to Holy Conduct	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12	Phillip
7	S 11/17	The Coming of the Lord Jesus	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11	Grant
8	W 11/20	Communal Relations	1 Thessalonians 5:12-28	Phillip
9	S 11/24	Vindication of the Faithful	2 Thessalonians 1:1-12	Phillip
10	S 12/1	The Man of Lawlessness & Day of the Lord	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Phillip
11	W 12/4	Encouragement to Faithfulness	2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5	Phillip
12	S 12/7	Congregational Admonitions	2 Thessalonians 3:6-17	Phillip
13	W 12/10	Review		Phillip

# Class Introduction

Although 1&2 Thessalonians are among the earliest letters written by Paul, he was already a seasoned preacher and teacher of the Gospel of Christ, as well as an experienced ‘church-planter’ by the time he first came to Thessalonica in 49 AD. These two letters are a memorial to the work that Paul did to establish and stabilize a newly formed group of believers who had fully committed to Christ in the midst of a pagan-dominated culture. In typical fashion, though, Paul himself attributes whatever successes this young community had to the work and word of God.

In this class we want to examine these letters to discern how Paul works among his congregations even in his own absence from them, and to understand how the faithful response of the Thessalonian church is a tribute to both Paul and God – a tribute which will receive its payoff at the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To that end, we are presenting four concrete goals for the teachers and students:

- ❖ Understanding of the Thessalonian church and way(s) that the letter addresses their situation
- ❖ Appreciation for the ‘pastoral’ function of Paul’s apostolic ministry and writings
- ❖ Highlight the use of ‘election’ and ‘holiness’ language for exhortation of the church
- ❖ Discernment of the way the second coming of Christ impacts Christian faith and behavior

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION ON THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was founded around 315 BC by Cassander, king of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon, who named the city after his wife. After the Roman Empire took over the region, Macedonia was made a province of the empire in 146 BC, with Thessalonica serving as the capital. With a population estimated by historians estimated between 65-80,000, Thessalonica was well-known as the major metropolitan center of the region. Significantly, the city lay at the crossroads of major trade routes running in all directions, including the Via Egnatia which was the main east-west road spanning ancient Greece connecting Asia minor to the Adriatic Sea and on to Rome. So, the city was a major commercial center, where most of its inhabitants would have been professional tradesmen or manual laborers.

Thessalonica was designated as a ‘free city’ within the empire (as opposed to a ‘colony’ like nearby Phillipi), so that while it was still subject to imperial policy, it was allowed the privilege of self-governance within the city. The highest officials in the city would have been the ‘politarchs’ mentioned in Acts 17:6, who would have had full authority on all local affairs. Nonetheless, the city maintained a well-known commitment to Rome as the political and cultural power of the day.

It is known that Thessalonica participated in and promoted many of the worship cults of the Roman deities, including Heracles, Apollo and Aphrodite among others. The free spirit of pagan religious culture also stretched into worship of some Egyptian divinities, ‘mystery’ cults, and the imperial cult which honored the emperor as a divine figure. As typical in most areas in the Mediterranean world, a Jewish presence and synagogue was part of the city landscape, though Jews would have removed themselves city affairs

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### Lesson 1: Founding of the Church in Thessalonica

#### Acts 16:6-10, 17:1-15

*Key Verse: "...we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is – the word of God – which also performs its work in you who believe." – 1 Thessalonians 2:13*

#### OVERVIEW:

- Paul's call to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10)
- Social and Religious Culture of Thessalonica
- Early Converts among Jews and Gentiles (Acts 17:1-4)
- Controversy and Departure (Acts 17:5-10)
- The work of an Apostle in presence and absence

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. At least how long were Paul and Silas in Thessalonica?
2. From Acts 17:4, describe the demographics of those who believed Paul's preaching of the Gospel message. What does 1Thessalonians 1:9 have to contribute to that picture? 2 Corinthians 8:2?
3. What example did Paul set for the people in his own work and habits (1 Th. 2:9, 2 Th 3:7-8)
4. What are the accusations that some of the Jews made against the house of Jason and his fellow-Christians?
5. Summarize the reputation of the Thessalonians among others of Paul's churches (1 Th. 1:8, 2 Th. 1:3-4)

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Explain why Paul's 'custom' is to initially preach in the synagogue. What is significant about the make-up of this church in light of that practice?
2. Combined, Acts and Thessalonians paint a picture of a struggling but devoted teacher who is driven away from his followers because he became a reputational risk within the society. In what ways might that affect the relationship between Paul and the church in his absence?

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### Lesson 2: Literary Features of the Thessalonian Epistles

#### ALL of either 1 Thessalonians OR 2 Thessalonians

*Key Verse: "For we never came with flattering speech...or with a pretext for greed...nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." – 1 Thessalonians 2: 5-8*

#### OVERVIEW:

- Authorship, Date & Occasion
- Purpose & Function
- Style & Language
- 3 Models for Reading the Thessalonian letters

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who are the authors of these letters? (Compare 1 Th. 1:1, 2 Th. 1:1 and 2 Th. 3:17!)
2. What does 1 Th. 3:1-7 imply about the timing of that letter relative to the founding of the church? What prompts Paul to send this letter?
3. Compare 1 Th. 4:13 with 2 Th. 2:1-2. How do the two potential 'misunderstandings' described differ from one another?
4. How many times in these two letters does Paul mention to the Thessalonians something that they 'know' or 'remember'?

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What do Paul's metaphors of motherhood and fatherhood (1 Th. 2:7, 11) suggest about his relationship to the Thessalonian church?
2. How do the following impact the overall message of 1 Thessalonians? (See 1 Th. 1:2-5)
  - a. The loving choice of God the Father
  - b. The lordship of Jesus Christ
  - c. The power of the Holy Spirit
3. How do the following impact the overall message of 2 Thessalonians? (See 2 Th. 1:5-7)
  - a. The righteous judgement of God
  - b. The lordship of Jesus Christ

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### Lesson 3: Thanksgiving for Progress of the Church

#### 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

*Key Verse: "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth..." – 1 Thessalonians 1:8*

#### OVERVIEW:

- Greeting (1:1)
- Paul's Prayers for the Thessalonians (1:2-5)
- Reception of the word (1:6-7)
- Reputation of the church (1:8-10)

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the specific things about the Thessalonian church that Paul gives thanks for in his prayers?
2. What two things in v. 4 describe the relationship between God and the church?
3. In 1:5-6, what kind of experiences does Paul recall accompanied the Thessalonians introduction to the gospel?
4. In this section, Paul describes the gospel in terms of its effects, rather than (re-)stating its content (like he does in some other letters). What does 1:8 suggest about why that is?
5. How far had the reputation of Thessalonian faithfulness spread by the time this letter was written?
6. What adjectives describe the God that the believers turned to from their idols?

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Recall the circumstances of Paul's departure from the church in Thessalonica. How do Paul's references to remembering and praying for them immediately help him connect to the church with this letter?
2. What is the link between God's love for and election of the church in v.4, and the gospel preached to the church in v. 5, and the response of the church to that gospel in v. 6-7?
3. How could the Thessalonians have become imitators of Paul AND the Lord (Jesus)?
4. What does service to God have to do with waiting for the Lord? How does God's wrath factor into that?

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### Lesson 4: Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16

*Key Verse: "Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." – 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

#### OVERVIEW:

- Coming to Thessalonica (2:1-2)
- Paul's character as an evangelist (2:3-12)
- Imitators in suffering (2:13-16)

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. List the techniques which Paul did *not* use when teaching the gospel among the Thessalonians.
2. What is the contrast in apostolic 'method' described in 2:6-8?
3. What positive attributes does Paul recall in his own labor among them? What was the goal this approach as stated in 2:12?
4. What does the word of God (as opposed to a human message) do for believers (2:13)?
5. How had the Thessalonians become an imitation of the Christians in Judea?

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paul spend so many words describing what his preaching and teaching was not? Why does he then spend so many words asserting his positive character as an evangelist?
2. How does the character of the preacher affect the message of what is preached?
3. Twice in this section, Paul appeals to the church and/or God himself as a 'witness' of the truth of Paul's memories. Why does Paul do this?
4. How do the familial metaphors in this section underscore the relationship Paul is attempting to maintain with the church in this letter? How do they create relationships among the church members?

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**Lesson 5: Re-Establishing Contact**

**1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13**

*Key Verse: "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you," – 1 Thess. 3:6*

OVERVIEW

- Paul's desire to return to Thessalonica. (2:17-20)
- Timothy returns to Thessalonica. (3:1-5)
- Timothy brings a good report back to Paul. (3:6)
- Paul responds to their current condition. (3:7-13)

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why is Paul unable to visit with the Thessalonians? (2:17-18) Where did he stay? (3:1)
2. What is the purpose of Timothy's visit? (3:2-5)
3. What effect did Timothy's report have on Paul? (3:6-8)
4. What did Paul pray about on behalf of the Thessalonians? (3:9-13)

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why does Paul call the Thessalonians his "joy or crown" in 2:19? What does this mean?
2. What does this passage teach about suffering and affliction?
3. How does the arrival of someone like Timothy strengthen local Christians? How does hearing good news about the condition of Christians in difficult places strengthen evangelists?
4. What phrases or ideas in this passage would you like to understand better?
5. What key facts do we learn in this section about:
  - God:
  - Local Churches:
  - Life as a Christians:
  - Paul & His Coworkers:
6. What positive qualities are seen in this passage that can help you live "in holiness before our God?"

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### Lesson 6: Exhortation to Holy Conduct

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

*Key Verse: "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you," – 1 Thess. 3:6*

#### OVERVIEW

- Resurrection for those who 'Sleep' (4:13-)
- The Day of the Lord as a Thief (5:1-5)
- Warning to Stay Sober (5:6-11)

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the model for the hope that exists for those who have died in the Lord? (4:14)
2. What is the 'Word of the Lord' that Paul gives in 4:15?
3. Contrast the movement of Jesus in 4:17-18 to Daniel 7:13-14. In what way may these two passages be connected?
4. To what is the timing of the Day of the Lord compared?
5. In what conditions does Paul exhort his church to be in 5:6f?

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why is Paul only addressing the question of dead Christians now in this letter? What does Paul seem to have taught about the Coming of the Lord when he was among them?
2. What is significant about the way in which the Resurrection is ordered, as indicated by Paul's teaching in chapter 4? in 5:9-10?
3. Even though Paul says he doesn't need to write to the Thessalonians about the Day of the Lord, he does expound
4. Twice in this reading we are advised to encourage or comfort one-another with the teachings about Christ's Coming. How does our outlook on ultimate future salvation affect our present behavior and lifestyle?



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### Lesson 7: The Coming of the Lord Jesus

#### 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

*Key Verse: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him." – 1 Thess. 5:10*

#### OVERVIEW

- Resurrection for those who 'Sleep' (4:13-)
- The Day of the Lord as a Thief (5:1-5)
- Warning to Stay Sober (5:6-11)

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the model for the hope that exists for those who have died in the Lord? (4:14)
2. What is the 'Word of the Lord' that Paul gives in 4:15?
3. Contrast the movement of Jesus in 4:17-18 to Daniel 7:13-14. In what way may these two passages be connected?
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#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why is Paul only addressing the question of dead Christians now in this letter? What does Paul seem to have taught about the Coming of the Lord when he was among them?
2. What is significant about the way in which the Resurrection is ordered, as indicated by Paul's teaching in chapter 4? in 5:9-10?
3. Even though Paul says he doesn't need to write to the Thessalonians about the Day of the Lord, he does warn them a great deal about it. What is the impact of the instructions to 'keep awake' and 'keep sober'?
4. Twice in this reading we are advised to encourage or comfort one-another with the teachings about Christ's Coming. How does our outlook on ultimate future salvation affect our present behavior and lifestyle?

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# Lesson 8: Commands That Create Peace in The Church

## 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

*Key Verse(s): "Live in peace with one another." (4:13b)*

*"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." – 1 Thess. 4:23*

### OVERVIEW

- Respecting godly leaders. (5:12-13)
- Refraining from revenge when hurt (5:15)
- Studying and applying God's word (5:19-22)
- Responding to the struggling (5:14)
- Bringing three qualities to every situation. (5:16-18)
- Depending on God & Final greetings (5:23-28)

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What three actions are performed by spiritual leaders in the local church? (vs. 12-13)
2. What three types of individuals are described in verse 14 and what is the proper response?  
Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Response: \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why would verse 15 be especially important among new Christians?
4. What kind of things would the Thessalonians be examining carefully in verse 21 and 22?
5. What kind of greetings would violate verse 26? How does this disrupt the peace of the church?

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How do these commands promote peaceful relationships in the local church?
2. Joy, prayer, & gratitude are all described as daily, on-going parts of the Christian life. Which one requires the most effort to maintain on a daily basis? How can these habits be further developed?
3. What terms describe the ideal condition of a Christian at Christ's return? How will we reach that condition? (vs.23-24)

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# Lesson 9: Justice & Judgement When the Lord Returns

## 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

*Key Verse: "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire." – 2 Thess. 1:6-7*

### OVERVIEW

- Thanks for their faith, love, and perseverance. (1:1-4)
- The penalty of eternal destruction. (1:5-10)
- Paul's constant prayer for goodness and glory. (1:11-12)

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do verse 3 and 4 relate to Paul's commands in 1 Thess. 4:1-2, 9-10?
2. What is the basis for affliction or relief in verses 5-7?
3. What two groups of people in verse 8 will receive punishment at the Lord's return? What else do we learn about this judgment from Acts 17:30-31? Revelation 20:11-15?
4. According to verses 9 and 10, what do we know about the nature of the punishments and rewards Christ will bring about?
5. Paul did not pray for their persecution to end, but did pray for five things:

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### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. How can our love for one another abound more and more?
2. How can the knowledge of the coming judgment and justice of Christ help Christians during their persecution?
3. How can we "obey the gospel?"
4. What calling is Paul referring to in verse 11? What is necessary to be counted worthy of this calling?

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# Lesson 10: The Man of Lawlessness & The Day of the Lord

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

*Key Verse: "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." – 2 Thess. 2:3*

### OVERVIEW

- Avoid the Deception: The day of the Lord has not yet come. (2:1-2)
- Recognize the Apostasy: The man of lawlessness must first be revealed. (2:3-9)
- Traits of the Deceived: The wickedness of those who perish. (2:10-12)

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In verse 2, what three methods of communication might be used to disturb the Christians with false information?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. List the identifying traits of the man of lawlessness:
  - son of \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ himself above every so-called god or object of worship
  - takes his seat \_\_\_\_\_ of God,
  - displaying himself as \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What will Jesus do to the man of lawlessness according to verse 8?
4. Find the two phrases that mention wickedness and two phrases that mention truth in vs 9-12. What is the significance of this contrast?

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Verse 1 describes Jesus' return as both a "coming" and a "gathering." How are both of these concepts encouraging?
2. What is the relationship between the man of lawlessness and Satan in this chapter?
3. Verse 8 indicates that Jesus' victory is accomplished with his mouth. How is this similar to Rev. 19:15?
4. 2 Thessalonians is written to Christians who in many ways are babes in Christ. Why is instruction on Jesus' second coming important for new Christians?

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# Lesson 11: Encouragement to Faithfulness

## 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

*Key Verse: "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command." – 2 Thess. 3:3-4*

### OVERVIEW

This section describes the salvation of the Thessalonians in stark contrast to the judgment of 2:11-12.

- Your Identity: You are chosen, saved, sanctified, prepared for glory. (2:13-14)
- Your Advantage: You have been extensively taught and abundantly blessed. (2:15-17)
- Your Prayers: Your good works and good words are a blessing to others. (3:1-2)
- Your Lord: You can rely on the faithfulness and direction of the Lord. (3:3-5)

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do we learn about each member of the Godhead in 2 Thess. 2:13?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ to God for you
  - \_\_\_\_\_ by the Lord
  - \_\_\_\_\_ by the Spirit
2. What did God use to call those "chosen from the beginning" according to vs. 14?
3. While awaiting the coming of Christ, what should the saints be devoted to? (vs. 17, 3:1)
4. The Thessalonians confidence was not in their own strength or holiness, but in the power and love of Jesus. What traits and works of the Lord were especially important for the saints to remember? (3:3-5)
  - The Lord is \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 3)
  - He will \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ you (vs. 3)
  - We have \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord (vs 4)
  - May the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ (vs 5)

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. 2 Thess. 2:13 describes our sanctification as the result of both the Holy Spirit and the truth. How would you describe the connection between the Spirit & the truth? See also: John 17:17, 1 Peter 1:2, Rom. 15:16
2. What big ideas from 3:1-2 can we use to pray about evangelism today?
3. Personal reflection: How can you improve in standing firm and steadfastness? (2:15 and 3:5)

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# Lesson 12: Commands to Lead a Disciplined Life

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6-17

*Key Verse: "For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." – 2 Thess. 3:11-12*

### OVERVIEW

- Rebuke and separation from unruly brothers. (3:6)
- Reminder of the evangelists' example and instructions. (3:7-10)
- Details of the sins and solutions (3:11-13)
- Consequences for those who will not repent (3:14-15)
- A prayer for peace and note of authenticity. (3:16-17)

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. 1 Thess. 4:10-12 already described a disciplined life. What additional details are taught in this section?
2. What "traditions" does Paul refer to in 2 Thess. 3:6?
3. What is the "good" that Christians might grow weary of doing in vs. 13?
4. Identify the 5 qualities that must make up our response when "anyone does not obey our instruction..."
  - take \_\_\_\_\_ (14)
  - do not \_\_\_\_\_ with him (14)
  - put to \_\_\_\_\_ (14)
  - do not regard him as \_\_\_\_\_ (15)
  - admonish him as \_\_\_\_\_ (15)
5. Consider the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. How would the men with 5 or 2 talents have treated the man with 1 talent if following these commands?

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. According to verse 16, what is the desired outcome of these commands?
2. Verse 17 shows that God wants us to have confidence that the Scriptures we read are authorized. What other traits help verify God as the source of these commands?