

Our Future with Christ...

Paul's letters to the

Thessalonians

Part 1 – First Thessalonians

Study Series prepared by Graeme Offer

Foreword

The Thessalonian letters were the first letters (that we have) that Paul wrote. After a brief visit and establishing the church, Paul is forced to leave. He is deeply concerned about the young church, and the teaching that he had not had time to deliver. The second letter was written almost immediately following the first.

This study is not intended to present a scholarly approach to the book – in fact on the contrary, it is intended to enable the readers to understand and comprehend the message – just as the readers in the first century church at Thessalonica would have understood it. The purpose of this study is to give an *ordinary bible reader*, a broader understanding of the letters.

A note on "convention". I plan to study the two Thessalonian letters as two parts of one extended study. Therefore whenever I have referenced a scripture passage as 1:3:1 or 2:3:1 being the first verse of the third chapter of the first and second letter respectively.

Throughout the studies, I have mostly quoted from the New International Version (NIV) or the New King James Version (NKJV), and have attributed the quotations accordingly. Occasionally, I have used others, where those versions (in my opinion) better describe the point the author is trying to get across. On occasions where quotations appear that are not referenced, they are my paraphrase of what the verse says, and may or may not bear similarity to recognized translations.

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My usual teaching style is to hand out the outline for each lesson at the start of the lesson. I will often discuss last week's homework, or the background / introduction section as a way of getting the class "into gear" in the process. The questions on the outline are designed to help us come to a grasp of the main issues that Paul wants the readers to understand, and to form an outline of the class. They are not designed to identify the micro-issues, although the class discussion may get into some of these. I hand out the notes at the end of the class. They are designed to answer all of the questions that were raised in the outline sheet – often in more detail than that covered in the class. I almost never hand out the notes at the start of the class. I have found that where I have done that it always results in people reading what is on the page and feeding that back during the class without really thinking about or sometimes even comprehending what is there. The notes also serve the very useful purposes of allowing those who may miss one of the classes to *catch up*, as well as providing a review of the material covered for those who were present. It is almost inevitable that some areas in the notes will not be discussed during the class, and that many issues will come to light during the class discussions that are not in the notes. The notes therefore provide a *compliment* to the class discussions.

I **always** set homework, and that includes a few thought-provoking questions that go beyond the things that we have covered in the class.

My prayer is that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we consider some of the practicalities of the gospel and the implications and relevance of God's power and grace to our walk with God and our daily struggles to live the christian life.

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Part 2 – Second Thessalonians

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