

Twelve Lessons

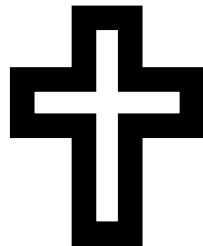
on

I Thessalonians

Compiled and Written

by

Ronnie Simpson, Ph.D., Th.D., LL.D., D.D.



Macedonia Baptist College

9722 Hwy 601

Midland, NC 28107

(704) 784-4200

\$6.00

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THE MODEL CHURCH – LESSON 1

Introduction: Acts 17 tells us that Paul was in Thessalonica for three Sabbaths. It is unclear how long Paul stayed in Thessalonica but we do know that he was there long enough to receive two “home missions offerings” from the church in Philippi (Phi. 4:16). Also, I Thessalonians 2:9 and II Thessalonians 3:6-15 tells of Paul busy at his tent making occupation to sustain himself. During his brief stay, he started a local church and taught some major doctrines of the Christian faith, especially the doctrine of the Second Coming.

Lesson Goals:

1. Give an overview of the historical setting of the letter to the Thessalonians, discussing the doctrinal issues concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ for which purpose the epistle was written.
2. Recognize the qualities of the Thessalonian church which made it a model for all others.
3. Discuss the Second Coming of Christ and the effect it should have upon the local church.

Definitions of Important Terms/Phrases:

1. Rapture – A term not found in Scripture but used by Bible students to describe the “catching away” of the church as mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:16. The term means “a seizing or to transport.”
2. Model – A pattern of something to be made; any thing of a particular form, shape or construction, intended for imitation; primarily, a small pattern; a form in miniature of something to be made on a larger scale

I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE

A. Three Lessons from the Background of the Thessalonians

1. God uses people – Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus – Here we see a converted Jewish rabbi, a Jew, and a young man who was part Jew and part Gentile. It doesn’t matter who you are, God just needs someone who will obey Him.
2. The Gospel still works – This church was founded in less than one month.
3. The Gospel always brings opposition – But opposition can be a means of growth.

B. The Theme of the Letter

1. The theme of the letter is the Second Coming of Christ. Paul had emphasized that the Coming of the Lord was imminent.
2. Since he had left, false teachers had come in, teaching that the resurrection was past. This led to two confusing thoughts.
 - a. Some of their loved ones had died. The sorrowing loved ones wondered if their Christian dead would be included in the rapture of the Church. Paul corrected this in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.
 - b. Because of the great persecution, some of the believers thought that the Tribulation had arrived so Paul wrote another letter, II Thessalonians, to explain that they were not in the Tribulation.

C. The Threefold Purpose of this Letter

1. To Confirm the believers in their Salvation
2. To Condition the believers in Sanctification
3. To Comfort the believers in the Second Coming (This is the major purpose)

D. Chapter Emphasis concerning the Doctrine of the Second Coming

1. Chapter 1 – The Doctrine Produces Examples – vs. 7,10
The Christian’s Life in View of Christ’s Coming
2. Chapter 2 – The Doctrine Produces Evangelism – vs. 2,4,8,9,10
The Christian’s Service in View of Christ’s Coming
3. Chapter 3 – The Doctrine Provides Establishment – vs. 2,13
The Christian’s Suffering in View of Christ’s Coming
4. Chapter 4 – The Doctrine Provokes Exhortation – vs. 1,13-18
The Christian’s Sorrow in View of Christ’s Coming
5. Chapter 5 – The Doctrine Provokes Expectation – vs. 4-6,23
The Christian’s Safety in View of Christ’s Coming

II. THE MODEL CHURCH – Chapter 1 – The Doctrine of the Second Coming Produces Examples

A. The Men of God – vs. 1 – “*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus*”

1. When combined, these three names suggest the characteristics of a model pastor.

- a. Paul means “little”. He was small in stature, but spiritually he was a giant. Every man of God should be more concerned about his “spiritual” stature before God than his “physical” stature before men.
 - b. The name Silvanus or Silas means “of the forest”. It speaks of abundance, fertility, generosity, fruit-bearing and stability. The man of God must show the qualities.
 - c. Timotheus is defined as “God-fearing”. Psalms 111:10 – “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” An attitude of reverence for God is foundational to true spiritual wisdom.
2. The three-fold salutation suggests the convictions of a Model Pastor.
 - a. Election – “*unto the church of the Thessalonians*”
 - 1) The word for church, *ecclesia*, means a “called out assembly” and is used in the New Testament in a non-technical way of the Israelites in the wilderness and also of the mob at Ephesus.
 - 2) *Ecclesia* specifically designates a local assembly of people who have been united to Jesus Christ and to each other by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 3) A call in the Bible indicates Divine election. Acts 15:14 – “*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.*”
 - 4) A Model Pastor has the conviction that a chosen people is a changed people. See vs. 3, 9-10
 - b. Enclosure – “*which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ*” – “In” is emphasized in this chapter. It is used 12 times.
 - 1) Significant to notice the second “in” is in italics suggesting the unique union which the Son of God has with the Father. It intimates His deity and equality with the Father.
 - 2) “In” is *en*, a fixed position inside a circle or sphere. The church’s location and existence is in the sphere and power of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 3) A Model Pastor has the conviction that a saved people is a secured people.
 - c. Exhortation – “*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
 - 1) “Grace” and “peace” are at both ends of the scale. “Grace” (rejoice) and “peace” (quietness, rest). God’s people can both “rejoice” and “rest.”
 - 2) A Model Pastor has the conviction that converted people are controlled people.

B. The Method of Proclaiming God’s Word – Simplicity marked the early church. Programs have and are strangling today’s Bible-believing Churches. Notice the emphasis of the first century Church.

1. Praying – vs. 2 – “*making mention of you in our prayers*”
 - a. “*Mention*” means to remember by recital. Paul had a prayer list. He uses the same word in Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16 and Philemon 4.
 - b. “*In*” comes from *epi*. “In our prayers” shows us that each time Paul prayed he brought out that prayer list so to speak and prayed for his converts.
 - c. “*Prayers*” here refers to an oratory of supplication. Paul prayed out loud to God for these converts.
 - d. A praying Church is a caring Church.
2. Preaching – vs. 5 – “*For our gospel came not unto you in word only*”
 - a. “*Gospel*” or *euaggelion* means the good news.
 - b. The Gospel was delivered in boldness.
 - c. A preaching Church is a powerful Church.
3. Teaching – vs. 6 – “*And ye became followers*” – To follow means to mimic or imitate.
 - a. They were good students. The term followers meant they learned their lesson well and put into practice what they were taught. They were not spectators but players and performers.
 - b. A Model Church teaches followers. Discipleship is the program of the church.
 - c. It is important to understand that inspiration without education produces frustration. We cannot inspire our members to do the will of God without showing them how to accomplish it. The Church is failing in “training” converts. Matthew 28:20 – “*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*” Often we preach but do not teach our people how to do what we preach.
 - d. A teaching Church is a producing Church.
4. Evangelization – vs. 8 – “*For from you sounded out the word of the Lord*”
 - a. “*Sounded*” or *exechetai* means to sound out of a trumpet or of thunder, to reverberate like an echo.
 - b. “*For from you*” – As a sounding board or radio transmitting station they were getting out the Gospel. As soon as they came to know Christ, they immediately undertook a program of home and foreign missions. They sounded out the gospel in their own district in Macedonia. It spread to adjacent territory in Achaia, and then went to the regions beyond, “*in every place.*”
 - c. An evangelistic Church is an expanding Church.