

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### *Introductory Section I*

#### CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

1. What made the Thessalonian church a church to be thankful for? (I Thess. 1:2-7)
2. What will happen to the dead when Jesus comes back? (I Thess. 4:14-17)
3. The shortest verse in the Bible is actually in I Thessalonians. Where is it?
4. Would God actually cause anyone to believe a lie? (II Thess. 2:11-12)
5. Was Captain John Smith the first man to say, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat"?

These, and many other equally interesting questions, will be answered in your study of THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS.

### *Introductory Section II*

#### A. CHAPTER TOPICS OF I THESSALONIANS

(By all means *memorize these chapter topics*. If you only remember these, you will have gained a fair idea of what is in every chapter of the whole epistle.)

Chapter 1—Paul's Thanks for the Thessalonians.

Chapter 2—Paul's good record among the Thessalonians.

Chapter 3—Paul's current dealings with the Thessalonians.

Chapter 4—(Two topics)

(1) The walk of the Christian.

(2) The dead in Christ and the Lord's coming.

Chapter 5—(Two topics)

(1) Times and seasons of the Lord's coming.

(2) Practical exhortations.

#### B. OUTLINE OF I THESSALONIANS

(You should memorize *now* the headings of Part One and Part Two of the outline, and the Scripture limitations of these parts. Notice also that both parts close with a prayer. You will not need to memorize the sub-points in each part now. These will be taken up as each chapter is studied. More complete outlines of each chapter are given at the beginning of the notes on each chapter.)  
Greeting; 1:1

PART ONE—Paul's relations with the Thessalonians, past and present; Chapters 1,2,3.

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

- I. Paul's thanks for the Thessalonians; 1:2-10
  - A. When Paul expressed thanks; 1:2-3
  - B. Things for which Paul expressed thanks; 1:4-10
    1. Their election; 1:4-6
    2. Their ensample; 1:7-10
- II. Paul's good record among the Thessalonians; 2:1-16
  - A. Paul's work among them; 2:1-12
  - B. Thanks for the way they received the word; 2:13-16
- III. Paul's current dealings with the Thessalonians; 2:17-3:10
  - A. Paul's desire for personal visit hindered; 2:17-20
  - B. Timothy sent; 3:1-5
  - C. Joy upon Timothy's return; 3:6-10Concluding prayer; 3:11-13
- PART TWO—Exhortations and teachings; Chapters 4 and 5.
  - I. The walk of the Christians; 4:1-12
  - II. The Lord's coming; 4:13-5:11
    - A. The dead in Christ and the Lord's coming; 4:13-18.
    - B. Times and seasons of the Lord's coming; 5:1-11
      1. Comes as a thief; 5:1-3
      2. Will not come to Christians as a thief; 5:4-11
  - III. Practical exhortations; 5:12-22Concluding prayer, commands, and benediction; 5:23-28

### *Introductory Section III*

## THE LORD'S COMING IN THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES

(Memorize the facts written in italics.)

1. The Lord's second coming is mentioned so many times in the Thessalonian epistles, that we can accurately say that *His second coming is the theme of both of the epistles*. It is mentioned in every chapter of both epistles.
2. *About one out of every eight verses in I Thessalonians refers to the Lord's coming*. I Thessalonians has a total of 89 verses. Eleven of these verses mention or refer to the Lord's coming. These verses are 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-4, 23.
3. *About three out of every eight verses in II Thessalonians refer to the Lord's coming*. II Thessalonians has a total of 47 verses. Eighteen of these refer to or mention the Lord's coming. Verses referring to His coming are 1:6-10; 2:1-12; 3:5.
4. "Often today we are told that the second advent is a doctrine with which generally Christians are not to be occupied. Many

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

ministers never preach on it at all; many have no clear convictions regarding it. In the classrooms of theological seminaries this doctrine often becomes just a theme for academic discussion. But to Paul it was a tremendously important and exceedingly practical truth which needed emphasis because of its bearing on the hearts and lives of God's beloved people." (H. A. Ironside, *Addresses On the First and Second Epistles of Thessalonians*, p. 11)

5. What do the chapters of the Thessalonian epistles tell us about the Lord's coming?

First Thessalonians—

Chapter 1—We wait for His coming.

Chapter 2—The souls we have won will then be our crown.

Chapter 3—We shall be perfectly holy then.

Chapter 4—The dead in Christ will rise first, and then we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord.

Chapter 5—The day of the Lord comes as a thief, but Christians will not be overtaken by that day.

Second Thessalonians—

Chapter 1—It will be a time of retribution.

Chapter 2—A falling away and the man of sin must come first.

Chapter 3—May the Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.

### *Introductory Section IV*

## FACTS ABOUT I THESSALONIANS

(Memorize all facts in italics.)

1. *It is the first and oldest epistle of Paul that we have preserved for us. It may seem rather strange that the first epistle written by Paul should be placed near the end of the collection of Paul's epistles as they are arranged in the New Testament.*
2. *It was written during Paul's second missionary journey. I and II Thessalonians are the only letters of Paul we have that were written during the second missionary trip.*
3. *It was written about 53 A.D. Faucett's Bible Dictionary says it was written either in the autumn of 52 or the winter of 53, at the start of his one and a half year stay in Corinth.*
4. *It was written from Corinth. It was NOT written from Athens, as an unauthorized addition at the end of the King James says.*

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### *Introductory Section V*

#### DID PAUL REALLY WRITE I THESSALONIANS?

Yes, beyond question.

The epistle is referred to by Ignatius (about 110 A.D.), and by Polycarp (70-156 A.D.). It is quoted by Irenaeus (130-190 A.D.), by Clement of Alexandria (about 195 A.D.), by Origen (about 225 A.D.), and others. Tertullian (about 200 A.D.) quotes it twenty times. These people were Christian writers in the early history of the church.

I Thessalonians is listed in the Muratorian Canon (after 150 A.D.), in that of Marcion (about 140 A.D.), and Laodicea (A.D. 364). These are ancient lists of the books that were accepted as being inspired and part of the New Testament Scriptures.

Even critics who do not fear to assert that Paul did not write Ephesians can find no question about I Thessalonians.

### *Introductory Section VI*

#### THESSALONICA, THE PROUD CITY

(Thessalonica is pronounced Thess-uh-low-NYE-kuh.)

(We think all of the material in this section is interesting. We hope you will find it so also. But we confess that some of it is not of great importance in getting acquainted with the Thessalonian epistles of Paul. Therefore, we are printing in *italics* certain facts that *are* especially important. It is likely that questions will be asked about these facts in the "Did You Learn?" questions that follow section VII.)

1. Ancient Thessalonica reminds us of our modern cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles-seacoast cities, bustling, commercial, proud of their past and present.
2. *Thessalonica was located in the province of Macedonia, northern Greece.* Macedonia has no geographical boundaries on a modern map. Parts of ancient Macedonia lie in Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. But in the fourth century B.C. Macedonia was the ruling country of a great empire under Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great.
3. *Thessalonica lies on the seacoast of the Thermaic Gulf (now called the Gulf of Salonika), a part of the Aegean Sea. It rises from the end of the basin at the head of the gulf, climbs the slopes behind the gulf, and presents a striking appearance from the sea.*

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

4. The original name of Thessalonica was Therma, a Greek word meaning "hot places," being named for the warm mineral springs in the neighborhood. Cassander, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, changed its name to Thessalonica, the name of his wife, who was the daughter of Philip of Macedon and step-sister to Alexander.
5. After the battle of Pydna (164 B.C.), Thessalonica fell to Rome and was made capital of the second region of Macedonia. When the four regions of Macedonia were united into one province, Thessalonica became virtually THE metropolis of Macedonia. It was the capital of the entire province, and the residence of the provincial governor.
6. Augustus Caesar rewarded the loyalty of Thessalonica to him during the second civil war (42 A.D.) by making it a free city, with a popular assembly (Gr., ekklesia), and "rulers of the city" (called in Greek, "politarchs." This word is used in Acts 17:8). The political title "politarchs" is still to be read on an arch spanning the main street, from which we learn that there were seven politarchs.
7. In Paul's time Macedonia was not an imperial province requiring the presence of troops, but a senatorial province with the garrison removed. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that the people in Philippi and Thessalonica were so eager to declare that they were "Romans" and under "Caesar." See Acts 16:21; 17:7.
8. *The great Roman road called the Egnatian Road (Via Egnatia) ran through Thessalonica.* Indeed the main street of modern Thessalonica is the old Egnatian Road. This was the overland military highway from the city of Rome to the countries at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. From Thessalonica this road pass on through Apollonia, Amphipolis, Philippi, Neapolis, and on eastward. All of these places are mentioned in the book of Acts in telling about Paul's travels. It was about 100 miles from Philippi to Thessalonica on this road.
9. *Thessalonica was blessed with the best natural harbor in Macedonia.* The Romans established there a naval station and docks, and its importance as a seaport was thereby increased. The harbor of Thessalonica connected it commercially with Asia Minor and other more distant places.
10. *The excellent harbor and highway connections of Thessalonica made it ideal as a center from which the gospel could be sounded forth,* not only in Macedonia and Achaia (southern

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

- Greece), but in every place. (Achaia is pronounced A-KAY-yuh.)
11. *Thessalonica was home of some religions that practiced sexual orgies.* It was the home of two recognized mystery religions, the religion of Dionysius, the dying and rising God, and Orpheus, hero of a related and somewhat reformed Dionysiac cult. Both of them were fertility cults, expressing themselves in phallic symbols and sexual symbols, in wild orgies, and extravagant ecstasies. Along with these there was also a primitive cult of Cabiri (Kabeiroi), which was of similar character. Furthermore, at the time Paul lived, emperor worship was practiced in Macedonia. These facts explain why Paul wrote such commands as I Thess 4:3-6: "This is the will of God—that ye should abstain from fornication."
  12. In Paul's time Thessalonica had a mixed population of Greeks, Romans, and Jews, the first being the most numerous. Perhaps the Jews were drawn to Thessalonica by the opportunities for commerce there. There was a synagogue in Thessalonica, whereas Paul found none in Philippi. As many as 10,000 Jews have dwelt in Thessalonica in modern times.
  13. Thessalonica was the mainstay of Eastern Christianity during the Gothic invasion in the fourth century A.D. It was called the "Orthodox City." It continued to be a bulwark of the Christian faith in the East for centuries.
  14. Thessalonica was taken by the Saracens (Mohammedans) in 904, by the Crusaders in 1185, and the Turks in 1430. They held it till 1913 when the treaty of Bucharest gave it to Greece.
  15. Thessalonica is still a flourishing city. Its modern name is Salonika. It is one of the only two really large cities in Greece, and has grown rapidly in recent years. 1951 population, 217,049. 1961 population, 373,635. (The other large city is Athens, which, with its port of Piraeus, had a 1961 population of 1,852,709.) Thessalonica was severely damaged in World War II.
  16. Modern Salonika is described as a "maze of crooked and cobbled alleys, flanked by the bare walls and stout doors of small houses. Spires of Christian churches (Greek Orthodox) and minarets of Mohammedan mosques rise against the sky. Everywhere one sees Turkish costumes, and the peasant dress of Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria." (From *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia*, art. "Salonika". F. E. Compton & Co., Chicago, Ill., Copyright 1960).

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

### *Introductory Section VII*

#### PAUL'S WORK AMONG THE THESSALONIANS

This is an important section. Paul's work among the Thessalonians forms the background of many verses in the Thessalonian epistles. You will not be able to understand the Thessalonian epistles without knowing this background, which is largely told in Acts chapter 17. We are again printing in *italics* certain facts which are especially important for you to learn. Anything in italics will almost certainly be found in the questions that follow this section.

1. Paul was scourged and *imprisoned at Philippi*. I Thess. 2:1-2; Acts 16:19-40.
2. *Paul went with Silas and Timothy from Philippi to Thessalonica* (about 100 miles). Acts 17:1. (See if you can find both Philippi and Thessalonica on the map inside the cover of this book.)
3. Paul was bold to speak in Thessalonica, even after his experiences in Philippi. I Thess. 2:2.
4. In Thessalonica *Paul labored early and late to support himself*. I Thess. 2:9; II Thess. 3:8. (However, Paul did receive some help from the Philippian church while he was in Thessalonica. See Phil. 4:6.)
5. *In Thessalonica Paul preached on three Sabbath days* (3 weeks) in the synagogue of the Jews. Acts 17:1-3.
6. Some Jews believed. Acts 17:4.
7. *A great multitude of devout Greeks and chief women believed*. Acts 17:4. Paul's remarks in the Thessalonian epistles make it evident that the Thessalonian church was predominantly Gentile. I Thess. 1:9.
8. The converts received the word with joy of the Holy Spirit. I Thess. 1:5.
9. It would appear that Paul remained in Thessalonica longer than the three weeks he preached in the synagogue. The reference to the large number of Gentile believers who turned from idols to serve the living God (I Thess. 1:9; Acts 17:4) suggests that some time elapsed between his last service in the synagogue and the riot stirred up by the Jews. Also the evidence of organization and leaders in the Thessalonian church suggests that Paul was in Thessalonica longer than three or four weeks. I Thess. 5:12-13. Ramsay thinks that the period

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

must be extended seven or eight months. Others say only a few weeks. The time cannot be determined precisely. But it was not long enough to have solidly established the church.

10. In Thessalonica Paul evidently lodged in the house of Jason. Acts 17:5-7. Perhaps he held services there after quitting the synagogue. Jason may have been his kinsman. Romans 16:21.
11. Thessalonian Christians besides Jason (Acts 17:9) were Gaius (Acts 19:29), Aristarchus, and Secundus (Acts 20:4; 27:2), and possibly Demas (II Tim. 4:10). Aristarchus was his companion in travel, and shared his perils at Ephesus, and his shipwreck, and was his fellow-prisoner and fellow-laborer at Rome. (Acts 27:2; 19:29; Col. 4:10; Philemon 24).
12. *The Jews stirred up a riot against Paul* in Thessalonica. They apprehended Jason, but Paul escaped. Acts 17:5-9.  
The Jews accused Paul and the Christians of doing things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, and of saying that there was another king, Jesus. Acts 17:7. Paul had indeed preached about the "kingdom" of God. I Thess 2:12. The Jews perverted his words about the kingdom so as to have an accusation against him. It is an "undesigned coincidence" between the story in Acts and this epistle that the very charges against Paul and Jason (which are told in Acts) concerned this very matter of the kingdom (which is mentioned in the epistle).
13. *Paul and Silas fled by night to Berea.* Acts 17:10. Timothy must have joined them there afterwards. Acts 17:14.
14. After Paul left Thessalonica, the Thessalonians became missionaries themselves, and spread abroad the word of the Lord. Their experiences with the gospel become known in Macedonia and Achaia and every place. I Thess. 1:8.
15. Paul taught in Berea, but soon had to flee from there because of the Jews who came from Thessalonica. Acts 17:10-14; I Thess. 2:15-16.
16. *Paul went on from Berea to Athens.* Silas and Timothy remained at Berea, but Paul sent for them. *Timothy came on to him at Athens.* Acts 17:15; I Thess. 3:1-2.
17. Paul attempted twice, at either Berea or Athens, to get back to Thessalonica, but he was prevented from doing so. His anxiety over the young converts became very great. I Thess. 2:18; 3:10.
18. Not being able to return himself, *Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica from Athens* to see how the Thessalonian Christians were getting along. I Thess. 3:1-2.



## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

19. After *Paul* sent Timothy to Thessalonica, he *left Athens and went on to Corinth*. Acts 18:1.
20. We cannot tell exactly where Silas stayed after the time Paul left Berea. He may have remained in that vicinity. But when Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica, Silas rejoined Timothy somewhere, and *both Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia to Paul in Corinth*. Acts 18:5.
21. *Timothy brought Paul good news* of the faith and love of the Thessalonians, and that they had good remembrance of him. I Thess. 3:6.
22. However *Timothy* also seems to have *had a report of some defects still among the Thessalonians*:
  - (1) *They had not forsaken wholly the sensuality that characterized them as pagans.*
  - (2) *They had not forsaken the idleness* of some of their heathen countrymen. Some were not working to support themselves. I Thess. 4:3-5, 11.
  - (3) Also, because of a misunderstanding about the Lord's second coming, some of them were sorrowing. Paul had taught them to wait for the Lord Jesus from heaven. I Thess. 1:10. But as time passed and some of their number died, *they became grieved*, apparently *fearing that these dead would not share the blessings of the Lord's return*. I Thess. 4:13-18.
23. As we read the epistle, we get the impression that either by a verbal inquiry through Timothy, or in a note which the Thessalonians had written, that they had asked Paul about certain matters:
  - (1) Concerning brotherly love. I Thess. 4:9.
  - (2) Concerning the dead Christians. I Thess. 4:13.
  - (3) Concerning the times and seasons of the Lord's coming. I Thess. 5:1.
24. *It also appears that some accusations had been made in Thessalonica against Paul* after his departure. In First Thessalonians (especially in the second chapter) Paul defends his record among the Thessalonians quite vigorously. He defends himself against charges of flattery, mercenary motives, and impurity. He calls both the Thessalonians and God himself to witness that their lives were above reproach. I Thess. 2:3-10. It would have been surprising if the Jews had not made all manner of accusations against Paul after he left Thessalonica.
25. *Paul wrote and sent the first epistle to the Thessalonians im-*

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

*mediately upon the return of Timothy* to him with the report about the Thessalonians. I Thess. 3:6.

26. We can more or less sum up the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians as including the following:
  - (1) Thanksgiving for their fidelity.
  - (2) A defense of Paul's record among them.
  - (3) Instructions on matters about which they were ignorant, especially the Lord's second coming.
  - (4) Warnings about sinful attitudes still in some of them.
27. Paul visited Thessalonica later on his third missionary trip. Acts 20:1-2.
28. Paul probably visited Thessalonica when he came through Macedonia after his first imprisonment in Rome, in accordance with his hope to visit the Philippians (also in Macedonia). I Tim. 1:3; Phil. 2:24.

### DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over the Introductory Sections)

(No questions over Section I)

(Questions over Section II, CHAPTER TOPICS AND OUTLINE)

1. Write out from memory all the chapter topics of I Thessalonians. Check your answers with the list given.
2. What is the title of Part One of I Thessalonians?
3. What chapters are in Part One?
4. What is the title of Part Two of I Thessalonians?
5. What chapters are in Part Two?
6. With what does each part of I Thessalonians close?

(Questions over Section III, THE LORD'S COMING IN THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES)

1. What could we say was the theme of both the Thessalonian epistles? Why?
2. Approximately what portion of the verses in I Thessalonians is devoted to this topic?
3. Approximately what portion of the verses in II Thessalonians is devoted to this topic?

(Questions over Section IV, FACTS ABOUT I THESSALONIANS)

1. Who is the author of I Thessalonians?
2. What is the first and oldest epistle of Paul that we have?

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

3. During what missionary trip was I Thessalonians written?
4. What other letters were written by Paul during the same missionary trip?
5. In what year was I Thessalonians written?
6. From what city was I Thessalonians written?

(No questions over Section V)

(Questions over Section VI, THESSALONICA, THE PROUD CITY)

1. In what modern country was Thessalonica located?
2. What was the name of the ancient province where Thessalonica was located?
3. Does Thessalonica lie on the plains, seacoast, or the hill country?
4. What famous road ran through Thessalonica?
5. What natural feature made Thessalonica a great seaport?
6. What made Thessalonica an ideal center from which the gospel could be sounded forth?
7. What was the character of some of the mystery religions practiced in Thessalonica?

(Questions over Section VII, PAUL'S WORK AMONG THE THESSALONIANS)

1. In what city was Paul imprisoned before he came to Thessalonica?
2. How was Paul supported in Thessalonica?
3. On how many Sabbath days did Paul speak in the synagogue in Thessalonica?
4. How did the Greeks receive Paul's preaching?
5. What happened that caused Paul to leave Thessalonica?
6. Where did Paul go from Thessalonica?
7. Where did he go after that?
8. Whom did Paul send to Thessalonica when he could not return himself?
9. After Paul sent (whom?) \_\_\_\_\_ to Thessalonica, Paul left (what city?) \_\_\_\_\_, and went to (what city?) \_\_\_\_\_.
10. In what city did Silas and the man Paul sent to Thessalonica rejoin Paul?
11. Was the report about the Thessalonians good or bad?

## THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

12. What were two defects in the Thessalonian Christians?
13. What misunderstanding about the Lord's coming grieved some of the Thessalonians?
14. What does Paul's defense of his record among the Thessalonians make it appear had happened in Thessalonica after he left?
15. How long was it after Paul received the report about the Thessalonians before he sent the first epistle to the Thessalonians?

## MEMORY WORK

The following passages should be committed to memory. But you can learn the verses suggested from each chapter as you study that chapter. The verses to be committed to memory are also given in the "Thinking Through Thessalonians" questions at the start of each chapter.

I Thess.—1:9-10; 2:13; 3:12-13; 4:13-17; 5:1-2, 23.

II Thess.—1:6-9; 2:3, 13; 3:1,3,10.