



THESSALONIANS

HOPE FOR A HOPELESS WORLD

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PRAY BEFORE YOU DO YOUR LESSON

1. Pray God would help you understand His Word.
2. Pray God would do heart transformation as you read His Word.
3. Pray that you would love God more.
4. Pray that God helps you apply His Word to your life.
5. Pray that God helps you desire to study His Word & spend time with Him daily.
6. Pray that the lesson would be heart work and not homework.

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STUDY NOTES FOR THESSALONIANS

1. Assurance of Salvation
2. The Holy Spirit
3. Flee from Idols
4. Defining Terms
5. Sanctification
6. Judgment
7. The Fall of Satan
8. Christ's Second Coming

LESSON 1

TURNING TO GOD FROM IDOLS

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1. To get more familiar with the study, skim **1 Thessalonians** and note every verse that refers to Christ's return. (Hint: There is at least one verse in every chapter.)
2. How would you describe the church of Thessalonica? What words does Paul use to encourage this church? Why did they need encouragement?
3. Paul speaks of the gospel in **verse 5**. How would you explain the gospel to someone who has never heard about Jesus?

4. Have you ever had a “Paul” in your life to encourage you, pray for you and model for you what it is to be a Christian? How could you be a “Paul” for someone else?
5. What does it mean to turn to God from idols? Define idol. What are some of the idols that are worshiped today? What is an “idol” in your heart that you need to turn from?
6. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

7. What do we know about Paul's time in Thessalonica from Acts 17? Find Thessalonica, Macedonia and Achaia on a Bible map. On which of Paul's journeys did he visit Thessalonica?
8. The letter was written by Paul, while Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy were with him. What do you know about these three individuals?
9. Paul tells us that Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath. What is the "coming wrath?" (Find Scripture references to support your answer)

Memory Verse - 1 Thessalonians 1:10 ESV

"and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

LESSON 1: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 1: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 2

CALLED INTO HIS KINGDOM AND GLORY

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1. Read **Acts 16** about Paul's time in Philippi. In what ways was Paul treated "outrageously" or "shamefully" in this city? Who opposed Paul's message?
2. How did Paul explain his motives in appealing to the Thessalonians? Have you ever judged someone's motives without knowing the whole story?
3. What does it mean to be "entrusted with the gospel?" What does it mean to you personally?

4. Do you struggle with being a people-pleaser? What does Paul say about this? Who is it that you most want to please? (Be honest with yourself)
5. What three qualities does Paul point out in **verse 10** to describe how he and his companions acted among the Thessalonians? Are these qualities elevated in our world today? What qualities would you say are elevated in our culture?
6. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

7. The exhortation of **verse 11** is to live a life that is worthy of God. Look up “worthy” in the dictionary. Where else in Scripture do we see this exhortation? What does it mean to live a life that is worthy of God?
8. **Verse 11** speaks of God’s kingdom. How did Jesus describe His kingdom? (Give Scripture references)
9. **Verse 11** also speaks of God’s glory. Look up “glory” in the dictionary. What is “God’s glory?” Where else does the Bible speak of God’s glory?

Memory Verse - Matthew 6:33 ESV

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

LESSON 2: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 2: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 3

LONGING TO SEE YOU

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

1. Are there people in your life that you pray for continually, thanking God for them? Who do you pray for regularly? Who is praying for you?
2. How is the word of God at work in your heart? How is God's Word different from other things you read or hear?
3. Paul speaks of suffering at the hand of his own people in **verse 14**. Have you ever been hurt by the words or actions of a family member or a close friend? How did you respond? Looking back, did you respond in a godly way?

4. Have you ever experienced intense longing to see someone? How did/does God comfort you in the wait? (Any verses you could share?)
5. What did it mean that Satan blocked their way (**Verse 18**)? Have you ever experienced this in your own life? Why do you think God would allow this to happen?
6. How does Paul speak of the coming of the Lord Jesus? How do you talk about it with others?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. See if you can find the five crowns mentioned in the New Testament. Paul says the Thessalonians are his hope, joy and crown of boasting. What is your glory and joy?
9. Who were the Jews that Paul mentions in verse 14 (since Jesus, the Apostles, and all of the early believers including Paul were Jews)? (You may need a Bible commentary to help you.)

Memory Verse - 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 ESV

“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.”

LESSON 3: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 3: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 4

TIMOTHY'S ENCOURAGING REPORT

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

1. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter? Why did Paul send Timothy to Thessalonica?
2. Have you ever felt that your labors for the Lord were in vain? What verses could you pray to be encouraged?
3. What was the news that Timothy brought back to Paul? How did this news encourage Paul?

4. Why did Paul have joy in the presence of the Lord? Do you have this kind of joy?
(Read Psalm 16)

5. In verse 10, Paul says that they prayed earnestly day and night. Does this describe your prayer life? How would you like to make your own prayer life stronger? Have you had an answer to prayer this week?

6. Who is it that makes love increase and overflow? How does this happen? Do you have this kind of love? **(Read John 7:38-39)**

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. Find as many verses as you can that exhort believers to be holy.
9. Throughout Scripture there are promises of the Lord's return. Does this make you fearful or joyful? Why?

Memory Verse - Psalm 16:11 ESV

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore”

LESSON 4: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 4: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 5

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1. Do you live to please God? What would you have to change in your life to do this “more and more?”
2. What is God’s will for your life? (See also 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
3. What particular sins does Paul warn against? As you read these verses, what do you imagine the culture was like in Thessalonica? How does that compare to our culture today?

4. Why do you think Paul recommended a quiet life? How would you benefit from a quieter life?
5. In John 13 Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another. How did Jesus also demonstrate His love for His disciples in this same chapter?
6. What kind of difference would it make in our families, our workplace, and our churches if we loved each other with God's love? **(1 Thessalonians 4:9)**

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. To whom does God give His Holy Spirit? Do you have the Holy Spirit of God?
(Read Romans 8)
9. Is it possible to win the respect of those outside the church without compromising your faith? Where are you tempted to compromise?

Memory Verse - John 13:35 ESV

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”

LESSON 5: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 5: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 6

THE TRUMPET CALL OF GOD

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

1. What does it mean to fall asleep in Jesus? What was the misunderstanding in Thessalonica that Paul was addressing?
2. What are the three announcements that will accompany the Lord's return?
3. Who are the dead in Christ? Why do you think that they will rise first at the return of Christ?

4. What do you picture when you think about Christ's return? What images come to mind?
5. How does Paul describe what will happen to those who are still alive when the Lord returns?
6. When you read that "we will be with the Lord forever," how do these words encourage you?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. How does Paul describe what death will be like for the believer in **Philippians 1:18-26**?
(See also **John 11:25-27** and **Revelation 14:13**)
9. Pray through these verses and ask the Lord to show you someone that you can encourage this week with these words.

Memory Verse - John 11:25-26 ESV

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”

LESSON 6: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 6: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 7

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-12

1. What does it mean that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night?” Who will be most surprised at His coming?
2. How does the Lord Jesus say we should prepare for His coming? **(Read Matthew 24 & 25).** Are you prepared?
3. What image does Paul use to describe the suddenness of Christ’s return? Where does Jesus use this same image as He speaks of His Coming? **(Matthew 24)**

4. What will people be saying before destruction comes on them? How are people deluded in the same way today?
5. Light and darkness is a powerful contrast to describe two types of people. Who are the children of the light and who are the children of the darkness?
(Read John 3:16-21)
6. What additional metaphor does Paul use in **verse 6** to describe those who are ready and those who are not? What does Paul admonish us to do to be ready? How did this list remind you of the armor of God in **Ephesians 6**?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. What does it mean that God did not appoint us or destine us to suffer wrath?

9. How many places in Scripture can you find references to the day of the Lord?

Memory Verse - 1 Thessalonians 5:9 ESV

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

LESSON 7: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 7: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 8

LIVE AT PEACE WITH EACH OTHER

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. Who has the Lord placed in authority over you? How do you show that you respect and esteem them?
2. What admonishments does Paul give in verses 12-15?
3. What does it mean to “rejoice always?” What does Paul mean when he says that we are to “pray without ceasing?”

4. How will you choose to “give thanks in all circumstances” this week? Write down the things that you are thankful for in your life. (Share with your group)
5. Paul warns us not to quench the Spirit. Look up the word “quench” in the dictionary. Do you think that you are quenching the Spirit by any of the choices you are making?
6. In **verses 20-22** Paul lists four additional warnings or admonitions. How will you apply these to your life?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. What attributes of God have you seen in this letter? How will you praise God for these attributes this week?

9. Why do you think Paul wrote this letter to the church at Thessalonica?

Memory Verse - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

LESSON 8: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 8: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 9

GOD IS JUST

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

1. How does Paul begin and end most of his letters? What are the key words he uses in his greetings and salutations?
2. Why is he thankful to God for this church? What commendation does he give them?
3. How will the Lord demonstrate His justice at His return? What is necessary to be considered worthy of the kingdom of God?

4. What vivid words does Paul use to describe the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven?
5. What will be the punishment for those who refuse the gospel of the Lord Jesus? How will you respond to this warning?
6. In contrast, how will the saints be treated at His coming? Are you certain that you belong to Him? (If not, will you talk to your leader about it?)

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. How would you explain the words “worthy of His calling” to a new believer?

9. What did you learn about the judgment of God in these verses?
(See note #6 on Judgment.)

Memory Verse - 2 Thessalonians 1:2 ESV

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

LESSON 9: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 9: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 10

JESUS IS VICTORIOUS

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1. What was the false teaching that had taken hold in this church? How did Paul speak to this erroneous teaching? Have you ever been deceived by false teaching?
2. How is the man of lawlessness (the son of destruction) described in these verses, and what will he do when he is revealed?
3. What will the Lord Jesus do in order to defeat the lawless one?

4. Who is the power behind the signs and wonders of the lawless one? What can you do to be protected against this great deception? (**Ephesians 6:10-20**)

5. Why are the wicked perishing? What is the “truth” spoken of in **verse 10**?

6. What does it mean to delight in wickedness? (**Verse 12**)

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. Where else in Scripture do we read about Christ's victory over sin and death?

9. What did you learn about the Lord Jesus and His Coming from these verses?

Memory Verse - Hebrews 2:14-15 NIV

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

LESSON 10: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 10: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 11

STAND FIRM

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

1. How would it change your outlook every day if you remembered that you are beloved by the Lord and chosen by Him for salvation?
2. What does it mean to be sanctified? How is this accomplished in the life of a Christian?
3. Read the story of the house on the rock in **Matthew 7:24-27**. What does Jesus say about standing firm? Would you say you have built your house on the sand or on the rock?

4. Is there someone you could encourage today with Paul's words in **verse 16-17**?
5. Paul asks for prayer in **2 Thessalonians 3:1-2**. How will you ask your group to pray for you this week?
6. In what situation in your life will you choose to stand firm on the rock of Jesus Christ?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. What does it mean to be chosen as “the firstfruits to be saved”? (**Verse 13**)

9. What do you know about the Feast of Firstfruits? (**Read Leviticus 23:9-14**). How is Christ “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”? (**1 Corinthians 15:20**).

Memory Verse - 2 Thessalonians 3:5 ESV

“May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

LESSON 11: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 11: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 12

BE BUSY, NOT A BUSYBODY

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

1. What was Paul's admonition against laziness or idleness? Did you think it was harsh or justified?
2. Paul's team "worked night and day." How did this set a right example for this young church? What kind of example are you setting for the young ones in your life?
3. Look up the word "busybody" in the dictionary. What is the difference between being busy and being a busybody? Have you ever struggled with this sin?

4. What was happening in this church that caused so much idleness? (You may need to use a commentary or study Bible for your answer.)
5. Have you ever grown weary in doing good? How does the Lord encourage you in your weariness?
6. How does Paul recommend dealing with a person who refuses to obey God's Word? Have you ever had to warn a fellow believer who was in sin?

7. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

Challenge Questions

8. List all of the verses you found in this study that refer to the Second Coming of Christ. How does this encourage you?

Memory Verse - 2 Thessalonians 3:18 ESV

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

LESSON 12: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 12: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

LESSON 13

PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

1. Paul's prayers of thanksgiving

- Read: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.
- Write your own prayer of thanksgiving for someone you love:

2. Paul's prayer for spiritual strengthening

- Read: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13
- Write your own prayer for spiritual strengthening for someone you love:

3. Paul's prayer of encouragement

- Read: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17
- Write your own prayer to encourage someone you love:

4. Paul's prayer for the church to be sanctified

- Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
- Write your own prayer for someone you love to be sanctified:

5. Paul's prayer for the spread of the gospel amid suffering

- Read: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
- Write your own prayer for the spread of the gospel in the world and send it to someone you know who is suffering for the sake of the gospel:

6. Paul's prayer for this church to have God's peace

- Read: 2 Thessalonians 3:16
- Write a prayer for peace for someone you love:

If you are bold, like Paul, would you take at least one of the prayers that you wrote out and send it (snail mail - envelope, stamp...) to someone you love?

LESSON 13: MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON 13: MESSAGE NOTES

WEEKLY PRAYER & PRAISES

STUDY NOTES 1

Assurance of Salvation

This doctrine is one of God's greatest blessings to the Church. To know with certainty that you belong to Jesus Christ, that your identity and destiny are secure in Him, is beyond wonderful.

There are many people who go to church or some kind of religious service each week, but they still lack the assurance of salvation. Some are taught that you can never be certain that your sins are forgiven, and that heaven is your eternal destiny. With no assurance, these people have no peace, and with no peace, many experience overwhelming anxiety.

Others have a false assurance based on their works, what they have done "for God" (**Matthew 7:22**). Still others are convinced that since they are a "good person," they will enter heaven's gates when they die.

For the true believer in Jesus Christ, we can enjoy peace knowing that our salvation is secure.

The foundation for our assurance of salvation comes from the Word of God.

Believers are truly "Standing on the promises of God."

Jesus promised: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (**John 6:40**).

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (**John 10:27-29**).

Paul declared: "...because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (**2 Timothy 1:12**).

The Apostle John testified: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (**1 John 5:13**).

The second reason for our assurance is Christ's finished work on the Cross.

From the cross, Jesus Christ declared, "It is finished" (**John 19:30**). There is no need for anything to be added to Christ's sacrifice - no religious ritual, no personal merit, and no works, regardless of how "good" they are. Jesus Christ has made atonement for sin "once for all" for those who will come to Him by faith.

Jesus Christ has satisfied God's holy demands for justice. He is holy and He cannot tolerate sin. On the Cross, Jesus Christ became sin for us, suffering the fullness of God's wrath against sin. He did this in our place, and if we have received Christ's offer of forgiveness, then we are forgiven and no longer under God's wrath, with no fear of God's judgment on sin (**Romans 8:1**).

"Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe." The huge debt of sin we have accrued has been paid. He has bought us, redeemed us, saved us, forgiven us, and delivered us from the penalty of sin and secured our place in heaven with Him forever.

God wants you to rest on the finished work of Christ knowing that it is sufficient for your salvation.

The capstone of our assurance of salvation is the seal of the Holy Spirit.

"And you were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory" (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

This is the inner confirmation that you are a child of God.

"And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us" (**1 John 3:24**). The Holy Spirit confirms in our heart what we already believe to be true.

Assurance of salvation is not based on feelings, but on the promises of God. What God has done to save you can never be undone. Our justification is a transaction before the Almighty Judge, and He has declared us, "not guilty." There is no higher court. God has done it and no one can undo it.

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (**Romans 8:38-39**).

STUDY NOTES 2

The Holy Spirit

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, the Triune God - *God the Father*, *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Spirit*.

The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son. Never refer to the Holy Spirit as an “it” or an influence. The Holy Spirit is God, distinct from the Father and the Son, as we see at creation. The Holy Spirit is seen actively engaged in the work of creation along with the Father and the Son, “hovering over the waters” (**Gen 1:2**).

The Holy Spirit functions with mind, emotion and will. He can be grieved, quenched, lied to, tested, resisted and blasphemed. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent who uniquely came upon God’s servants and inspired God’s sovereignly-chosen men to record God’s Word (**2 Peter 1:20-21**).

Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit has been with believers to enable and empower them even before Pentecost.

- David (**1 Samuel 16:12-13**) - at his anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him.
- John the Baptist (**Luke 1:15**) - filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born.
- Mary (**Luke 1:35**) - the Holy Spirit came upon her to conceive the Christ child.

When John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, he said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. At Jesus’ baptism, “the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove” (**Luke 3:22**).

WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- Convicts the world of sin (**John 16:9**)
- Regenerates the believer (**John 3:5 & Titus 3:5**)
- Indwells the believer (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20**)
- Seals the believer (**Ephesians 1:13-14**)
- Infills the believer (**Ephesians 5:18**)
- Empowers the believer (**Acts 1:8; 4:31**)

- Guides the believer into all truth (**John 16:13**)
- Gives spiritual gifts to the believer (**1 Corinthians 12:1-11**)
- Enables the believer to bear spiritual fruit (**Galatians 5:16-23**)

The Holy Spirit is the believer's comforter, advocate, helper, teacher, counselor and guide.

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and will remain with the Church until it is complete and presented to the Lord Jesus at His coming. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ finished the work He came to do in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit will finish the work He came to do in the Church.

HOW CAN WE BETTER UNDERSTAND THE POWER AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The writers of the Bible used certain emblems when unfolding the mysteries of the Holy Spirit.

The first emblem is found at the baptism of Jesus (**Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22**) - **the dove**. The dove speaks of Christ's gentle, tender and peaceful nature. He came that we might know the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (**Philippians 4:7**). He is "gentle and humble in heart" (**Matt. 11:29**).

The second emblem is fire (**Luke 3:17**) as the purifying power in the life of the believer. We see this same emblem at Pentecost with the tongues of fire.

The third emblem is wind. In the Greek, the word for spirit is the same as the word for wind. Jesus speaks of the Spirit giving birth to spirit...like the wind blowing wherever it pleases. "You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going..." (**John 3:5-8**). The wind speaks of the hidden depth and mighty regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth emblem we see in the Scriptures **is water**. Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to water in **John 7:37-39**. Water speaks of His power to fill the believer to overflowing with spiritual life.

The fifth emblem is oil. In **Acts 10:38**, Peter speaks of Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. In the Old Testament oil was used to anoint kings, priests and prophets. It was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God for the duties of the office to which the person was being consecrated.

The writer of Hebrews quotes from **Psalms 45** which speaks of being anointed with the oil of joy referring to the Lord Jesus (**Hebrews 1:9**). Christ means "the Anointed One."

When Jesus spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room, He promised that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, would live with them and in them and in this way, He would never leave them. In **John 15:11**, He told them that His joy would be in them, "that your joy may be complete."

STUDY NOTES 3

Free from Idols

IDOL WORSHIP IN THE BIBLE

The first mention of idols in the Bible is found in Genesis 31. When Rachel fled from her father's house, she took the "household gods." In her effort to conceal what she had stolen she put them in her camel's saddle and sat on them. If any story would reveal the worthlessness of idols, it would be this story. Would you want to worship a God you could put in your saddlebag and sit on?

In Exodus, God revealed His supremacy over the gods (idols) of Egypt through the 10 plagues. With each plague the Lord demonstrated His power over the powerless idols of Egypt.

Now, you would think that Israel would have learned their lesson about idol worship when Almighty God delivered them from slavery in this pagan land. Yet, while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, his brother Aaron led the people in worship of a golden calf (**Exodus 32**).

In the Ten Commandments the LORD condemned all idol worship.

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (**Exodus 20:4-6**).

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people broke this commandment, and embraced the idols worshiped by the people around them. But, the LORD, in His mercy, sent prophets to warn them of judgment if they refused to abandon their idols and return to Him (**Jeremiah 3:12**).

During the years of the divided kingdom, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) had a succession of kings who led the people deeper and deeper into idol worship. It reached its peak during the reign of Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Even the showdown on Mount Carmel with Elijah and the prophets of Baal did not convince the people to turn to God

from idols. Eventually, the Lord fulfilled His threat and used the Assyrians to take them into captivity (722 B.C.).

Meanwhile, in the Southern Kingdom (Judah), there were a few righteous kings who tore down the high places and brought back true worship. More often there was a series of bad kings. Again, God sent prophets to warn His people of impending judgment, but the people refused to listen.

Eventually, the Lord brought the Babylonians against them. Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed the temple that Solomon had built and took the people into captivity (586 B.C.). **God keeps His promises and fulfills His threats.**

After 70 years in captivity, the people returned to rebuild the Temple and establish God-ordained worship. Years later, during the reign of Herod the Great the Temple in Jerusalem was expanded and embellished. It was the center of worship for the Jewish people, but even the temple itself became what Jesus called "a den of robbers" rather than a house of prayer (**Matthew 21:13**).

During the days of the Greek and Roman Empires, the cities outside of Jerusalem were filled with temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses.

In Acts as well as in Paul's letters we read about the prevalence of idol worship in these various cities. While in Athens, Paul was "distressed to see that the city was full of idols." (**Acts 17:16**). In Ephesus there was a great temple to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt. While Paul was in Ephesus, a riot broke out when Paul taught that "gods made by human hands are no gods at all" (**Acts 19:26**).

In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he was thankful they had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (**1 Thessalonians 1:9**).

At the close of John's first letter, he gives a final warning, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (**1 John 5:21**).

"Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry." (1 Cor 10:14)

Perhaps one of the greatest warnings against idolatry is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. He declares: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people... For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles" (**Romans 1:18-23**).

"The human heart is an idol factory." - John Calvin

An idol is anything that takes the place of the one true God. What are the idols in your heart?

STUDY NOTES 4

Defining Terms

REDEMPTION

The meaning of redemption is to buy back. In the Scriptures this term is taken from the ancient commercial world, and in particular, the buying and selling of slaves. One of the most beautiful pictures of redemption in all Scripture is the story of Hosea who purchased his fallen wife, Gomer, from slavery (**Hosea 3**).

Redemption implies bondage. Mankind was subject to the dominion and curse of sin from the time of the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Jesus said that anyone who sins is a slave to sin (**John 8:34**). In a secondary sense, the sinner is in bondage to Satan who reigns over the kingdom of this world. Third, mankind is in bondage to death, since all die and the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**).

In order to be set free from this bondage, Jesus Christ came as Redeemer. He paid the price to redeem mankind. He paid the penalty for sin by His death on the cross. We are set free (**Hebrews 2:14-15**).

Peter tells us that we have been “redeemed (or ransomed) by the precious blood of Christ” (**1 Peter 1:19**).

SALVATION

Salvation has the general idea of safety and deliverance. Jesus Christ is the author of salvation (**Hebrews 5:9**). The name Jesus/Joshua means “Jehovah is salvation.” Salvation is offered freely to all people but it is conditioned upon repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift (**Romans 6:23**).

What are we saved from? We are saved from the wrath of God which is His just judgment on sin (**Romans 5:9**).

There are three aspects to salvation. There is the sense in which we “have been” saved by trusting Christ for salvation (saved from the penalty of sin). There is also the sense in which we are “being saved,” as Paul refers to in **Philippians 2:12**: “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (saved from the power of sin). Third, there is the sense in which we “will be saved” when we are given our new glorious bodies without the taint of sin (saved from the very presence of sin).

Matthew tells us that Jesus came “to save his people from their sins.” (**1:21**)

REGENERATION

This is the radical change that Jesus described to Nicodemus as being “born again.” The concept is of God renovating the heart, the core of a person’s being, by implanting a new desire and a new purpose.

In John’s prologue, he declared: “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God” **(John 1:12-13)**.

Regeneration is entirely the work of God, through His Spirit, when we confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. **Regeneration is the transition from spiritual death (Eph. 2:1) to spiritual life. Believers are made new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).**

JUSTIFICATION

This is a legal term. It refers to the judicial act of God pardoning sinners. As sinners, we are estranged from God. **Justification means acceptance on the basis of Christ’s finished work on the Cross and receiving the gift of Christ’s perfect righteousness to enable you to stand before a holy God.**

Each one must stand before God, the Judge of all the earth. Either your sins are on you, and you stand before Him guilty and awaiting sentencing, or your sins are on Christ, and you are declared, “not guilty.”

To be justified is to be eternally secure. When you are declared, “not guilty” by the Almighty, there is no higher court, nothing and no one can undo what God, the Judge of all the earth, has done **(John 10:28-29)**.

ATONEMENT

This term means to make things right again, to be reconciled to God in a right relationship.

On the top of the Ark of the Covenant was the atonement cover or mercy seat of God. This is where God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle. Once a year the High Priest would bring the blood of a goat and sprinkle it on the mercy seat or atonement cover to make atonement for the people. Therefore, when God looked down at the Ark which contained the Law, the Law the people had broken, He would see the blood. The blood covered their sin, in a most literal sense.

When Christ came, as the Lamb of God, He made atonement for His people through His death on the Cross. By Christ’s sacrifice, the sins of every believer are “covered” or atoned for by His blood, and they are reconciled to God. **(Romans 5:10-11)**

Without Christ’s shed blood, no one can enter into the presence of God. But the writer of Hebrews says that because Jesus is our Great High Priest, we can “draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” **(Hebrews 4:16)**.

STUDY NOTES 5

Sanctification

To be sanctified is to be made holy, to be set apart, not for common use. It is to be ceremonially clean, purified, undefiled, devoted to God, separated to His service.

The goal of sanctification is perfect holiness.

“For it is written: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” **(1 Peter 1:16)**.

Whereas regeneration is a one-time event, when someone receives Christ and eternal salvation, sanctification is an ongoing process. Sanctification is the sustaining and developing work of the Holy Spirit, carrying the believer on to perfection, the work that began with regeneration.

Regeneration is birth; sanctification is growth.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit in God’s great plan of redemption to carry on this good work “until the day of Christ Jesus” **(Philippians 1:6)**.

Perfect sanctification is not attainable in this life, because we still carry the sin nature within us.

In **Romans 7**, the Apostle Paul tells of his own struggle with sin, and David, the man after God’s own heart, confesses his sin in the Psalms **(Psalm 32 & 51)**.

The more closely you cling to Christ, abiding in Him, the more humble, self-denying and self-renouncing you will become, and you will become more sensitive to every sin that lurks in your heart.

In His purpose to produce godly character in His children, God employs different methods. It may be pruning by the Father’s loving hand, designed to remove what is not fruitful in your life. Pruning may be for discipline or to make you even more fruitful, but everything He allows is designed to bring you closer to Him **(John 15:1-8)**.

The seal of the Holy Spirit assures us that we belong to God and we are permanently set apart for Him **(Ephesians 1:13-14)**.

It may be helpful to think of it this way. God owns the house and He is constantly remodeling. It's not just a little new paint, but He is tearing down walls - walls of prejudice and jealousy, ripping out cabinets of greed and bitterness, and replacing fixtures of anger, lust, self-pity and hatred with the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

He is conforming us to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**).

There is a moral renovation that takes place in our lives as we are continually transformed from what we once were to what we will be.

Oswald Chambers: "God is not after perfecting me to be a specimen in His showroom; He is getting me to the place where He can use me."

Only when we receive our new glorified bodies (with no sin nature) will the sanctifying process be complete.

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure" (**1 John 3:2-3**).

Today we experience a conflict between the sacred and the secular, the holy and the worldly, but one day all will be sacred or holy before the Lord.

The prophet Zechariah reveals this beautiful future. The High Priest of Israel, the only one allowed into the inner sanctum of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, and even then only once a year, wore a turban on his head with a gold plate fastened to it which bore the seal: **HOLY TO THE LORD**.

Zechariah looked forward to the day the LORD will come and reign on this earth and the lines between sacred and secular disappear and all is sacred before the Lord.

"And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, Holy to the LORD." And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts..." (**Zechariah 14:20-21**).

STUDY NOTES 6

Judgment

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light...” **(John 3:16-19)**.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER’S SINS

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” **(John 5:24)**.

This is a profound verse. Mark it in your Bible. Memorize it.

Jesus Christ has declared that everyone who believes on Him for salvation is no longer under the judgment (condemnation) of God for sin but has passed from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Jesus Christ was judged in the believer’s place. He bore our condemnation, the judgment we deserve, on His body on the Cross **(1 Peter 2:24)**.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” **(Romans 8:1)**.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER’S WORKS

Although the believer is no longer condemned, their works will be judged for their impact on God’s kingdom and His people. We are not saved by works **(Ephesians 2:8-9)** but saved to do good works to the glory of God.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” **(Ephesians 2:10)**.

For those who have believed on Jesus Christ for salvation, there is still a judgment to be faced, but it is NOT a punitive judgment, but an “evaluative” judgment where your works will be assessed and rewarded by Jesus Christ.

Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:10** that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, “so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body; whether good or evil.”

The judgment seat of Christ is also called the “Bema seat” where all believers will give an account of their works before God. It is a humbling thought to know that some day the believer will face all of their works - “good or bad.”

The Apostle Paul explained how the believer’s works will be evaluated:

“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each one’s work will become manifest for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire” (**1 Corinthians 3:11-15**).

Some will suffer loss, which is loss of rewards, but no one will lose their salvation.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED

The great white throne judgment will follow the thousand-year reign of Christ.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (**Revelation 20:11-15**).

At the great white throne judgment, there will be no acquittal, no higher court to which the lost may appeal. The wicked dead will be lost, lost forever, separated from God.

STUDY NOTES 7

The Fall of Satan

In **Romans 5:12** Paul speaks of sin entering the world through Adam. It is important to note that Paul does not say that sin “originated” with Adam. He said only that sin entered the world, that is the human realm, with Adam. Sin originated with Satan, who “has been sinning from the beginning” (**1 John 3:8**). John does not specify when that beginning was, but it was obviously before the creation of Adam and Eve, because they were tempted to sin by Satan.

All angels were created by God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (**Colossians 1:16-17**). There is nothing in all creation that was not created by Him. All angels were created in a holy state, because God is holy. Each was a direct creation of God.

In the beginning, Satan belonged to the cherub class of angelic beings as we read in Ezekiel. This passage is thought by Bible scholars to refer to Satan himself.

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you:
...Your settings and mountings were made of gold;
On the day you were created they were prepared.
You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you.
You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.
You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created
Till wickedness was found in you...
So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God,
And I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.
Your heart became proud on account of your beauty,
And you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor.
So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings...

Ezekiel 28:12-17 NIV

Satan fell from his original holy state when he rebelled against God, ensuring his own condemnation (**1 Timothy 3:6**). With him, perhaps as many as a third of the angels were

enticed to defect (**Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:4**). Now Satan and his angels (called demons) are permanently wicked and opposed to God and His people.

Jesus said: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (**Luke 10:18**).

What caused Satan’s fall? Isaiah gives us insight as he records the five “I wills” which expressed Satan’s pride and rebellion.

Again, Bible scholars believe that like Ezekiel, Isaiah was using language that goes far beyond a human king to Satan himself.

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!
You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

Isaiah 14:12-14

As a result of his sin, Satan was banished from heaven, corrupted in character and now opposes God and man with his perverted power. He is destined for the lake of fire (**Matthew 25:41**).

Jesus describes Satan as a liar and the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning (**John 8:44**). He is an opposer of the righteous (**1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10**). Satan’s very name means adversary and opposer, and he opposes God and truth and opposes God’s people.

Satan’s dominion is a vast army of angels who fell with him, and he is called “the god of this world” which includes men and angels outside the family of believers (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). He is the serpent of old, the dragon and the devil. Satan wages war against the believers. We are warned in the Scriptures to be aware of his tactics and guard against them. Satan plants doubts, tempts us to sin, and he is “the accuser of our brothers and sisters” (**Revelation 12:10**). He is the great counterfeiter, the great deceiver, even “masquerading as an angel of light” (**2 Corinthians 11:14**).

Although Satan is a terrible enemy, remember this:

- He is not omnipotent as God is - his power is limited and he can only do what God will permit (**Job 1:6-12**).
- He is also not omnipresent as God is - he cannot be everywhere tempting everyone at once.
- Above all, he is not omniscient - he does not know the future except as God has revealed it to us in the Scripture.
- Satan is loose but limited. He is a defeated foe. Jesus has already triumphed over him at the Cross. God tells us: “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (**1 John 4:4**).

STUDY NOTES 8

The Second Coming of Christ

In order to understand the Second Coming of Christ, it is important to understand what was accomplished at His first coming.

John the Apostle describes Jesus' first coming, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This is the incarnation.

At His first coming, He came as the Suffering Servant of **Isaiah 53**, and at His Second Coming, He will come as the Conquering King of **Revelation 19**.

"Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (**Philippians 2:7-8**).

Matthew tells us the purpose of His first coming was to "save his people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**).

Jesus came to die. By His death on the Cross, Jesus provided salvation from the penalty of sin for all who will come to Him by faith.

When the Lord Jesus walked this earth, He promised His followers that He would return. The day and the hour are unknown, but the promise is sure. Jesus said: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne" (**Matthew 25:31**).

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His apostles that He would return (**John 14:3**). When He ascended into heaven, two angels appeared to His followers and declared that Jesus would return in the same manner as they had seen Him go (**Acts 1:11**).

The New Testament is filled with verses about Christ's return. In fact, there are over 300 verses that speak of His return.

The purpose of the Second Coming will be to bring judgment on all those who have refused God's gracious offer of salvation through His Son and the consummation of salvation for those who have believed.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, "...This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not

know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might..."

Hebrews 9:28 says, "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

2 Thessalonians 1:10 says, "on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed."

1 John 3:2 says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke of the "Day of the Lord." The prophet Joel calls it the "great and dreadful day of the Lord." **Zechariah 14** declares that on that day the Lord will stand on the Mount of Olives.

That day will be accompanied by cosmic events.

Quoting Isaiah, Jesus said: "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken" (**Matthew 24:29**).

Paul tells us that we are to live upright and godly lives "while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (**Titus 2:13**).

The Lord Jesus tells us to watch for and be ready for His return because we do not know what day He will come (Matthew 24:42-44).

Do you long for His return? Can you say with the saints: "Come, Lord Jesus"?

THESSALONIANS

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