

## THE BIG READ (13)

### Jesus in 1 Thessalonians

#### A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”  
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. After the four Gospels that tell the story of Jesus’ earthly life, and Acts which traces the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, the remainder of the New Testament is made up of epistles or letters that were sent to individual Christians or churches.

These letters address specific situations in the lives of believers and through them we are taught how to live as God’s people.

3. 1 Thessalonians is the first of two letters written to the church at Thessalonica.

Thessalonica was an important trading city and at the time this letter was written, the chief city of the Roman province of Macedonia.

4. Around AD50, during his second missionary journey, Paul, along with Silas and Timothy, left Philippi and travelled the 100 miles or so along the Via Egnatia and arrived in Thessalonica.

“When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.” (Acts 17:1-5)

As Paul preached Jesus’ death and resurrection from the Old Testament Scriptures, people believed and a church was formed.

Within this new church were some Jewish men and this annoyed the unbelieving Jews who were unhappy about their change of allegiance and stirred up trouble for Paul and this new church.

“But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the market-place, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they put Jason and the others on bail and let them go. As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea.” (Acts 17:6-10)

It was too dangerous for Paul to remain in Thessalonica, so under the cover of darkness he and his companions were smuggled out of the city.

From Thessalonica they travelled to Berea, then on to Athens.

It was there that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to get news about how the church there was getting on.

“So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow-worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no-one would be unsettled by these trials.” (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3)

“For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.” (1 Thessalonians 3:5)

Timothy returned to Paul bringing news of the church.

“When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.” (Acts 18:5)

“But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.” (1 Thessalonians 3:6-7)

Paul by this time was now based in Corinth, and it was from there that he wrote this letter of 1 Thessalonians in AD51.

## **B. Why did Paul write this letters?**

1. There were two main reasons as to why Paul wrote this letter – one was a personal reason, the other was a pastoral reason.

2. The personal reason for writing was that the Jewish opponents were bad mouthing Paul and trying to persuade the church to believe that he didn’t really care about them.

They accused Paul of using flattery and distorting the truth in order to get converts.

“For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.” (1 Thessalonians 2:3)

They also accused him of being motivated by greed

“You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed – God is our witness.” (1 Thessalonians 2:5)

Paul is concerned that if the Thessalonian Christians believed these lies it might lead to them giving up their faith in Jesus.

3. The pastoral reason for writing was that this was a new church facing persecution.

He is thrilled to hear that they were continuing to trust in Jesus, but he was aware that there were many things about the faith they didn’t yet understand.

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God’s will you should be sanctified.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-3)

“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

4. So Paul writes 1 Thessalonians to defend his ministry against the false accusations being made about him and also teach them some key things they needed to know to live as followers of Jesus.



"But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)

"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God." (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

"But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you." (1 Thessalonians 2:17)

"How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?" (1 Thessalonians 3:9)

"Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:10)

4. In 1 Thessalonians 4-5 as Paul teaches the Thessalonians Christians some key things they need to know in order to live in a way that pleases God, he highlights a number of marks of what genuine Christian living is.

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other." (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

"Therefore encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

"So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

"Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you." (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

"And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone." (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

"Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

"Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good." (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

#### **D. Jesus in 1 Thessalonians**

"They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

1. Jesus is returning King we should turn to.
2. Jesus is the returning King we should serve.
3. Jesus is the returning King we should wait for.