

Contents

1 and 2 Thessalonians

1. The Gospel Comes to Thessalonica (June 30–July 6)	4
2. Protecting Relationships (July 7–13)	11
3. Thessalonica in Paul’s Day (July 14–20)	18
4. Joyous and Thankful (1 Thessalonians 1:1–10) (July 21–27)	25
5. The Apostles’ Example (1 Thessalonians 2:1–12) (July 28–August 3)	32
6. Friends Forever (1 Thessalonians 2:13–3:13) (August 4–10)	39
7. Living Holy Lives (1 Thessalonians 4:1–12) (August 11–17)	46
8. The Dead in Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) (August 18–24)	53
9. Final Events (1 Thessalonians 5:1–11) (August 25–31)	60
10. Church Life (1 Thessalonians 5:12–28) (September 1–7)	67
11. A Promise to Suffering People (2 Thessalonians 1:1–12) (September 8–14) . .	74
12. The Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12) (September 15–21)	81
13. Keeping the Church Faithful (2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:18) (September 22–28) . . .	89

Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

Come visit us at our Web site: <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Printing and Circulation Office: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193

Principal Contributor

Jon Paulien

Contributing Editors

George Belser
Esther Doss
Hilary Varner

Pacific Press® Coordinator

Wendy Marcum

Editor

Soraya Homayouni

Editorial Assistant

Sharon Thomas-Crews

Line Drawings

Matthew Bosley

Publication Manager

Lea Alexander Greve

Art and Design

Lars Justinen

E. G. White Estate Consultant

Ivan Leigh Warden

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published Bible study guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s). The Easy Reading Edition is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide in cooperation with Three Angels Deaf Ministries, PO Box 6114, Mesa, AZ 85216.

Introduction

When the Lord Comes Down From Heaven

In the 1950s, Nobel Prize winner and Irish author Samuel Beckett wrote a play called *Waiting for Godot*. It was about two homeless men, Estragon and Vladimir, who are waiting on the side of the road for someone named Godot. He is supposed to come and save them from a meaningless and foolish life.

“His name is Godot?” asks Estragon.

“I think so,” answers Vladimir.

Vladimir and Estragon are filled with the false hope that Godot will come. While they are standing, many suffering people slowly limp by them. Vladimir and Estragon are bored by all the pain of the useless lives they see. So, they try to do some good, such as lifting a blind man who has fallen.

“Come, let us get to work!” says Vladimir. He adds, “In a minute all will go away and we’ll [we will] be alone once more, in the middle of nothingness!” But as Vladimir reaches out, he falls and cannot get up.

There are more promises that Godot will come. But life seems so hopeless that Vladimir and Estragon decide to hang themselves. They have no rope, so Estragon takes off the cord that holds up his pants. His pants then fall to his ankles. Both men pull the cord to see how strong it is. The cord breaks, and both men almost fall. They decide to find a better rope and try again later.

“We’ll [we will] hang ourselves tomorrow if Godot does not come,” says Vladimir.

“And if he comes?” asks Estragon.

“We’ll be saved.”

This mysterious Godot never comes. This means they are not saved. Of course, they are not supposed to be saved. Beckett’s whole point with the play is to show how foolish and hopeless life is.

Oh, how different is the view of life given in the Bible. We will learn just how different the Bible’s view of life is this quarter as we study the apostle (teacher and leader) Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians.

The Thessalonians had many things in common (the same) with the two persons in Beckett’s play. They had stresses (worries), and they had to face injustices. Life was hard and rough for the Thessalonians as it is for all of us. How easy and understandable it would have been for the Thessalonians to have felt as lost, useless, and hopeless as the people in Beckett’s play. But the Thessalonians had a sure hope. This was a hope based on what Christ

had done for them. This was the hope that pointed to the greatest promise of all—the Second Coming. The Second Coming is the event that Beckett was making fun of in his play. Paul had scolded the Thessalonians for their behavior problems and wrong religious ideas. But Paul wrote some of the most positive and hopeful words in the whole Bible to the Thessalonians, and to us.

“The Lord himself will come down from heaven. We will hear a loud command. We will hear the voice of the leader of the angels. We will hear a blast from God’s trumpet. Many who believe in Christ will have died already. They will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them. We will be taken up in the clouds. We will meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with him forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, NIrV).

Nothing is more hopeful or glorious (worthy of praise) than that!

Through Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians, we will study the life of an early Christian city church. And we will realize some of the struggles and challenges that it faced. Some of the problems came from the fact that Christ had not yet come back. It is interesting to realize that Paul’s words to the Thessalonians show the same issues (problems) and challenges that we, too, face while we wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus. But His death on the cross at the first coming guarantees His return in glory at the Second.

Jon Paulien is dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California.