Contents

1 The Gospel Comes to Thessalonica—June 30–July 6 ———— 6
2 Preserving Relationships—July 7–13 ———— 14
3 Thessalonica in Paul’s Day—July 14–20 ———— 22
4 Joyous and Thankful (1 Thess. 1:1–10)—July 21–27 ———— 30
5 The Apostolic Example (1 Thess. 2:1–12)—July 28–August 3 ———— 38
6 Friends Forever (1 Thess. 2:13–3:13)—August 4–10 ———— 46
7 Living Holy Lives (1 Thess. 4:1–12)—August 11–17 ———— 56
8 The Dead in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13–18)—August 18–24 ———— 64
9 Final Events (1 Thess. 5:1–11)—August 25–31 ———— 72
10 Church Life (1 Thess. 5:12–28)—September 1–7 ———— 80
11 Promise to the Persecuted (2 Thess. 1:1–12)—September 8–14 ———— 88
12 The Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1–12)—September 15–21 ———— 96
13 Keeping the Church Faithful (2 Thess. 2:13–3:18) —September 22–28 ———— 104

Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site: http://www.absg.adventist.org

Principal Contributor
Jon Paulien

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Wendy Marcum

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Concept Design
Dever Designs

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 the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).
In the 1940s, Nobel Prize-winning Irish author Samuel Beckett wrote a drama called *Waiting for Godot* about two hapless, homeless men waiting on the side of the road for someone named Godot, who was supposed to come and save them from the meaningless and pathetic absurdity of life.

“His name is Godot?” Estragon asks. “I think so,” Vladimir answers.

As Vladimir and Estragon stand, suckled by the dehydrated hope that Godot will come, a procession of human suffering, missteps, goose steps, limps, and hobbles stomps past them. Bored, not so much by all the pain of life but by its uselessness, they seek diversion in doing good, such as lifting a blind man who has stumbled.

“Come, let us get to work!” Vladimir says. “In an instant all will vanish, and we’ll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!” But as Vladimir reaches, he falls and can’t get up.

Despite more promises that Godot will come, life seems so miserable in the meantime that they decide to hang themselves. But having no rope, Estragon takes off the cord that holds up his pants, which collapse around his ankles. To test the cord’s strength, the two men pull it; it breaks, and they almost fall. They decide to find a better rope and try again later.

“We’ll hang ourselves tomorrow,” Vladimir says. “Unless Godot comes.” “And if he comes?” Estragon asks.
“We’ll be saved.”

This mysterious Godot never comes, which means they’re not saved. They weren’t, of course, supposed to be. Beckett’s whole point with the drama is to show the absurdity and hopelessness of life.

What a contrast to the view of life presented in the Bible. In particular, what a contrast to the view presented in this quarter’s lessons, that deals with the apostle Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians.

Like Beckett’s two characters, the Thessalonians faced stresses, strains, struggles, even outright persecution. In other words, life for them, as for all of us, had its hard moments. How easy and understandable it would have been for them to fall into the futility, nihilism, and pessimism that Beckett expressed in his drama. Instead, the Thessalonians had a sure hope, a hope based on what Christ had done for them, a hope that pointed to the greatest promise of all—the Second Coming (which Beckett was mocking, as well). Though Paul had chided the Thessalonians, as they had behavioral, as well as theological issues in the church (sound familiar?), it was to them, and to us, that Paul wrote some of the most incredible, uplifting, and hopeful words in all inspiration.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:16–18).

It doesn’t get any more hopeful or glorious than that, does it?

This quarter, through Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians, we’ll get a glimpse into the life of an early Christian church—an urban church, really—and see some of the struggles and challenges that it faced, including the difficulties that arose from the fact that Christ had not yet returned. Fascinating, too, is that however different the Thessalonians’ circumstances were from our own, so often the principles reflected in Paul’s words to the Thessalonians deal with the issues and challenges that we, too, confront as we await, not some mysterious Godot, but the Lord Jesus, whose 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.
Got Questions?

Sabbath School University has answers!

*Sabbath School University* is a 28-minute discussion of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. SSU discusses the content and strategies to enrich your Sabbath School with fellowship, outreach, Bible study, and missions. Sabbath School leaders, don’t miss this weekly broadcast on Hope Channel.

[www.hopetv.org](http://www.hopetv.org)
HEARING IS ONE THING, BUT SEEING IS ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT.

With the Adventist Mission DVD, you see how lives are changed. You see how the church works around the world. You see how your mission offerings make a real difference, every single day.

A free Adventist Mission DVD from the world church headquarters is sent to your church each quarter. To see these inspiring stories, ask your pastor or Sabbath School leader to show them at your church. Or see them for yourself at www.AdventistMission.org.

Thank you for helping tell the world about Jesus through your mission offerings.