

# **THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS**

A Bible Student's Commentary  
by  
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In concert with dedicated Bible students  
choosing to be a part of this work and  
to whom it is dedicated.

This study, as in all my work, is subject to revision as more is learned

## I THESSALONIANS

Introduction and background to the epistle.

This letter to the church at Thessalonica is most likely the first letter Paul ever wrote. It follows his visit there on his second missionary journey (See: Acts 15:16-17:15).<sup>1</sup>

He had completed his first journey, met with the Jerusalem apostles, returned to Antioch (of Syria) and set out on this journey in 51-52 A.D.. He is accompanied by Silas and a letter from the Jerusalem leadership stating,

"The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." Acts 15:23-29

This letter resulted from a lengthy and often heated debate over the acceptance of Gentiles in the Kingdom of God without their keeping Biblical laws, Jewish customs and traditions - especially regarding circumcision. This discussion resulted from both Peter and Paul's experience of having Gentiles come to faith in Jesus when they heard the word. This had sent the strict Jews into a frenzy everywhere Paul went and it came to a head in Jerusalem resulting in the letter above. Paul faithfully read this letter to each and every congregation he met, and kept his word to the Jerusalem church about taking up a collection for the poor and disenfranchised in Jerusalem.

Paul's courage is apparent as he starts this journey as he revisits congregations in Cilicia and Galatia. In Lystra, during his first journey with Barnabas he was severely injured by a stoning resulting in his apparent or actual death (Acts 14:19). It was in Lystra, however, where Paul met Timothy and Timothy joined him on this journey.

After leaving Antioch (of Pisidia) Paul and his growing band of companions continued on to Troas, some 300 miles, a journey of several weeks. In Troas, Paul came into contact with the man who became "The Beloved Physician" to Paul. From Troas, they crossed over to Neapolis, the seaport of Philippi and gateway to Macedonia.

Taking the Roman road to Philippi, they arrived and sought lodging in the city. There was no synagogue in the city, but a few Jewish women and some of their friends who were "God-fearing" Gentiles met by the riverside (The Gangites River) for prayer each

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<sup>1</sup> The only other "candidate" vying for this honor would be Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

week (Acts 16:13-15).

The events at Philippi changed Paul's life and ministry forever and had an impact on the work at Thessalonica. Both Paul and Silas were arrested in Philippi on trumped up charges following Paul's casting a demon out of a possessed slave girl. Her owners, finding their means of profit gone angrily had Paul and Silas dragged before the magistrates in Philippi where they accused them of trying to introduce a new religion, prohibited under Roman law due to the unification edict of Claudius in 48-19 A.D. They were both severely beaten with rods, and imprisoned. An earthquake released them but in consideration of the jailers fate should they and the other prisoners escape, they remained in the jail. When this was discovered by the jailer, he was overcome with gratitude and he and his own household were saved and baptized. The magistrates, coming to release Paul and Silas and escort them out of town were informed they had beaten and imprisoned Roman citizens. Fearing reprisals, Paul and Silas agreed to leave town if the city would recognize the new believers as an acceptable religion of even a branch of Judaism ("a sect"), to which they quickly agreed. Luke remains at Philippi.

They faced this type of opposition and accusation frequently. Claudius' edict was often used as the reason to quash the ministry of Paul and Silas when the real reasons were never mentioned.

The same thing occurred at Thessalonica as seen in Acts 17:1-9,

1: Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2: And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3: explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4: And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5: But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6: When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7: and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8: They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9: And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

This pledge may have been another "deal" made to recognize the new "religion" or "sect" in return for Paul being removed from the scene and prevented from returning. Paul travels to Berea and then is soon forced to leave. Probably by ship leaving from Pydna some twenty-five miles to the Southeast of Berea, Paul and some "brethren" travel to Athens. Aristarchus may have been among them. Timothy and Silas remain at Berea.

Having arrived in Athens, Paul immediately sends these companions back to Berea

requesting Timothy and Silas come to him at once. However, Silas is gone when the “brethren” return to Berea, possibly going back to Thessalonica under the name “Silvanus” to help the church there. But since Timothy was able to convey to Paul at Athens a great deal of information from the church at Thessalonica, we can surmise one of the following:

1. Timothy may have gone with Silas to Thessalonica but returned to Berea.
2. The “brothers” returning from Paul at Athens went on to Thessalonica to retrieve both Timothy and Silas but it was incumbent upon Silas to stay at Thessalonica, contrary to Paul’s request. So only Timothy came to Athens.
3. Timothy was at Berea and received word of the condition and concern of the believers at Thessalonica.

So Timothy, escorted by some other brethren came to Paul at Athens with news including their deep concern for Paul and that the new believers at Thessalonica were under duress from attacks and persecutions (I Thessalonians 1:6, 2:14). Paul, in turn, became concerned and that their faith may be wavering (I Thessalonians 3:5).

Following Timothy’s arrival at Athens, Paul tells him he is going to Corinth and then sends him back to Thessalonica to “strengthen and encourage” the church (I Thessalonians 3:1-2). Part of the “strengthening” may have included the establishment of “Elders” in the church at this time (see:5:12). Apparently the church was very worried about Paul (I Thessalonians 3:1-4) and Paul about their faith (3:5). Then Paul, together with the remaining brothers, began the journey to Corinth.

After nearly two months, Timothy arrives back in Corinth with Silas and probably Aristarchus. (See Acts 19:29).<sup>2</sup> His report to Paul is not as serious as Paul had imagined it and Paul writes to them in the epistle we now call I Thessalonians. He sends it by the hand of one of the group who remains nameless, but is a trusted member of the missionary band. It was likely one of the men mentioned above. The year is c.52 A.D..

Returning to Corinth, this individual brings news and reports on some further challenges in the church for Paul to address. Paul writes II Thessalonians and sends it off to the church there.

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<sup>2</sup> Later Paul leaves for Caesarea by way of Ephesus and Aristarchus and Gaius go with him and remain at Ephesus where they are found to be residing when Paul returns there on his third journey.

# I THESSALONIANS

## CHAPTER ONE

1:1-4

1: “Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. 2: We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; 3: constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4: knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you;...”

1: “Silvanus” is Silas, Paul’s companion on his second missionary journey. Silvanus is his formal name. He is older than Timothy (placed before Timothy in the address) and called “one of the leading men” in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) as well as a “prophet” (Acts 15:32). These two men are mentioned to the church because the church knows them personally. They with Paul, founded the church there. The church (Greek – “ekklesia”) is “those called out” in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So those who are “in” God and Jesus are those to whom grace and peace are conveyed by Paul.

2: The thanksgiving is corporate. Paul, Timothy and Silvanus are included. This makes this epistle one of mutual concern and comes from all of them,<sup>3</sup> but Paul takes the ascendancy in the content. “Always mentioning you in our prayers...” That is, when Paul and the others are in prayer they consistently remember them to God. “All of you”...both Jews and Gentiles.

3-4: “constantly”, that is “without omission or interruption”. The three attributes of “faith”, “hope” and “love” are used frequently by Paul. He repeats these three together in I Corinthians 13:13; I Thessalonians 5:8; and in Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 5:5-6; and Colossians 1:4-5.<sup>4</sup> He combines them with the words “work”, “labor”, and “steadfastness”. These are not indicators that Christians should employ these things to have a relationship with God but that these things are a natural outcome from already having a relationship with God. The NIV translates this passage as, “...your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” This “hope” in Christ consists of Him fulfilling all the things He has promised, including (and perhaps most of all) His return for all His “saints” (1:10). This theme is highlighted later in Paul’s letter.

These attributes are done in the presence (or sight) of God showing they have been “chosen” by God. This “choosing” of them by God is the Greek word “εκλεγομαι” (ek-

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<sup>3</sup> There is the consistent use of “we” and “our” throughout the epistle. The only places Paul refers to himself is in 2:18; 3:5; and 5:27.

<sup>4</sup> Also see Hebrews 6:10-12, 10:22-24; I Peter 1:3-8, 1:21-22.

leg-o-mai”). It is translated “election” in the KJV. The word literally means “to speak out” or “call out” and is closely related to the word for “church”. It suggests here one of several possibilities in the context. 1. They had been chosen to hear the word - God knowing they would respond (verse 5), 2. Because of their works of faith, hope and love they are demonstrating the result of God’s choosing them. This verse is not to be applied to a “predestination” doctrine.

1:5-10

5: “...for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6: You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7: so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8: For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. 9: For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10: and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

5: There is a hint of a defense being made by Paul to these new believers in the remainder of this chapter and on into chapter two. It really begins in verse three where Paul is saying that the Gospel he preached is validated by their new life in Christ. Here, Paul makes note of “our” Gospel. Would this be in contrast with some other presentation? There is already confusion about the person and work of Jesus as Luke makes clear in the introduction to his work.

Paul also notes the deportment of he and his companions as a witness to their integrity and the validity of their Gospel. There is a hint that some opponents at Thessalonica may be trying to discount the legitimacy of Paul’s message or perhaps (as he soon came to realize) the legitimacy of his apostleship. This opposition or questioning of the truth regarding Paul’s legitimacy and the message he preached is hinted at in 2:2-6; 9-10; 3:5; 4:13.

6-7: “Imitators” is the word “μιμητας” (“mim-eh-tays”) from which we get the word “mimic” and “imitate”. This word is used numerous times by New Testament writers in much the same way or in urging Christians to become imitators of God, Christ, the Apostles or other believers (See also, 2:14).<sup>5</sup>

They had, “received the word in much *tribulation*”, “θλιψις” (“th-lip-sis”). This reaffirms Paul’s anxiety over them as the word means “affliction”, “anguish”, “persecution” “pressure” and “distress”. But they had also experience the “joy of the Holy Spirit”. This would be the joy the Holy Spirit brought to them when they received the word and believed.

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<sup>5</sup> See: I Corinthians 4:6, 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; Hebrews 6:12, 13:7; III John 1:11.

7-8: This “mixed” experience allowed them to be examples to others in Macedonia and Greece who received the word under similar circumstances. In spite of the “tribulations” the Thessalonian believers were not inhibited from spreading the word. The power of their conversion by the Word and Spirit of God was stronger than any persecution designed to stop them. As Thessalonica was a major city on the Egnatian Way, the multitudes traveling east and west through this city would facilitate the spreading of the word to both provinces.

“We have no need to say anything”. Paul and his companions find their mission made easier as the word is spreading without their direct involvement. The “sounding forth of the word” by the Thessalonians validates both their legitimacy as apostles, and the word they preach.

9: “They themselves” – the people of Macedonia and Greece. “Turned from idols” indicates Paul is essentially addressing Gentiles. These would have formerly been worshippers of “dead” gods and goddesses in the Greco-Roman pantheon. Paul’s address to the Athenians in Acts 17 uses their idols as a starting point for his message. This letter is written just a few months after Paul’s experience in Athens. Their “turning” from idols to serve the living and true God” is the mark of true conversion. The word “turning” is not the word for “repentance” but “επιστρεφω” (“epi-streph-o”) meaning “to turn about” or “reverse direction”. “Serve” is not “dia-ko-nos”, but “dou-leu-oh” meaning to become a “voluntary slave or servant of (God)”.

10: A part of their “turning to” and “serving” God is their “waiting” for the return of Christ. The word “wait” used here means to remain in the position they are in. In other words, maintain their faith in Christ in a consistent manner, regardless of the circumstances until He returns. “Heaven” is literally “the sky”, but implies the place where God dwells.<sup>6</sup> “Whom He (God) raised from the dead” – reiterating the foundation and evidence validating their “waiting”. Christ’s resurrection is the cornerstone of both Paul’s conversion and of his message. Without it, hope in Christ is pitiful and their faith useless (I Corinthians 15:1-20).

“Who rescues from the wrath to come”. Verse ten becomes a central focus in the church at Thessalonica as Paul spends considerable time on it in his second letter. No doubt the mention of this subject stimulated even more discussion among members of the Thessalonian church. They had already been discussing the entire matter of Christ’s return and the concern over those who had died before His coming.<sup>7</sup> What is their disposition? It is clear that they expected a soon return of Jesus and were confused about the “when” and the “how”. Discussion there was diverse and report of this had come to Paul when Timothy returned to Paul while he was still at Athens.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The word “heaven” or “heavens” can take on several meanings depending on the context. First, it simply means “the sky” as in Acts 1:11. Second it describes the place where the stars exist as in Matthew 24:29. Third it designates the place where God resides as in Ephesians 4:10 and II Corinthians 12:2.

<sup>7</sup> See: I Thessalonians 4:13

<sup>8</sup> See: 4:13-5:3

Diverse opinions about these future events came from a mixture from those who were still influenced by the characteristics of mythological gods, those steeped in Jewish apocalypticism, some influenced by philosophy, mystical religions like the new “Gnosticism” or rumors and teachings from others who thought they knew something about it.<sup>9</sup>

The point of Paul’s mentioning Jesus’ rescuing “us from the wrath to come” is to assure them that they would not suffer this “wrath” which is clearly the prophesied “wrath of God” so frequently mentioned in the scripture (Old Testament)<sup>10</sup>. This assurance is necessary because the historic “wrath of God” was feared by many as a personal or community possibility.<sup>11</sup> God’s “wrath” was threatened for Israel and often poured out on them using both human agencies and supernatural means. The “wrath to come” is associated with God’s divine judgment upon the earth. This “wrath to come” is also described as “the great and terrible Day of The Lord”. Believers will not suffer this wrath but be rescued from it.

The word “rescue” here is “ρυομαι” (roo-oh-mai”). It is different that the word “sod-zo” translated “salvation”, also suggesting “rescue” and it is different than “ex-ai-roh” or “har-padz-oh” meaning to “take up”, “take away” or “pluck”<sup>12</sup>. In this case, the word “rescue” pictures a rushing storm from which one is guarded, defended, preserved or protected. In the sense of one being “delivered” from wrath, it means that the “wrath” has no effect upon the “sheltered” - not that they are necessarily removed from it.<sup>13</sup> God shelters them with His “wings” or in His “hands” or “arms”.<sup>14</sup> However, in 4:13-5:11, Paul could be talking about the same event we have in 1:10. In that case, the saints are taken up to be with the Lord at his return and removed from the impending wrath upon the earth.

There is a contrast between “tribulation” and “wrath”. The Thessalonians suffered “tribulation” (1:6), but will be rescued from the “wrath to come”.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Note Paul’s words in II Thessalonians 2:1-2

<sup>10</sup> See: Numbers 16:46; Deut. 9:7; Psalm 21:8-10; Isaiah 59:18; Jeremiah 10:10; Nahum 1:2-6; Habakkuk 3:1-19; Zephaniah 1:1-18; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 3:7; Luke 21:23; Romans 1:18, 2:5-8, 5:9; Ephesians 5:6; and Revelation 6:6, 17 for a few examples of how this word is employed in both the Old and New Testaments. The word “orgay” translated “wrath” is consistently used in both the LXX and the N.T. It carries the root meaning of “tearing up”, “plowing up” or “destroying”. It is often used in conjunction with plagues.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 6:1; 38:1; 88:2-7; 90:7; Lamentations 3:1, for example.

<sup>12</sup> See Acts 7:34 and Galatians 1:4 where this word is used.

<sup>13</sup> See: Kittel’s “Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament”, Eerdmans’, 1968, Volume VI, pages 998-1003. It’s use in the Old Testament is illustrated by: Psalm 34:4, 54:7; Isaiah 25:4 (“defense”); Daniel 3:17, and in the New by: Matthew 6:13; Colossians 1:13; II Timothy 3:11, 4:18; and II Peter 2:9.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 19:4; Deut. 26:8; Deut. 32:7-11; Ps. 17:8; John 10:28 for example. See II Thessalonians 3:2 where Paul uses this same word in his prayer that he and his companions will be “rescued from perverse and evil men” in Corinth.

<sup>15</sup> See the “excursus” on the nature of Jewish eschatology beginning on the next page.

## EXCURSUS

### **The nature and understanding of Jewish eschatology contrasted with apostolic teaching**

A. The Jews understood there to be two “ages”, “this age”, and, “the age to come”. Those Jews who looked for a future age during the first century stood in contrast to those who did not consider it. The Pharisees held many of the beliefs with which we are familiar while others, like the Sadducees did not. Jesus spoke of these two “ages” (“αἰών” – meaning “an extended duration of time”. It is used of the present age and of eternity).

"Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come." Matthew 12:31

“...but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.” Mark 10:30

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Paul also noted the same:

Ephesians 1:21, “...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

The writer of Hebrews as well, Hebrews 6:5, “...and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come...”.

“This age” (or the “present” age) is the age of wickedness and evil.<sup>16</sup>

Luke 16:8, "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.”

Luke 20:34-36, 34: Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35: but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the

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<sup>16</sup> It began at creation or, at the time of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. See: Romans 1:20-25, 2:1-5; I Corinthians 15:21-23 for example.

resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36: for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

I Corinthians 2:6-16, 6: “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8: *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9: but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10: For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11: For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13: which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. 14: But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15: But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16: For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.”

B. (Part 1)The Jews believed that the “age to come” would be initiated by God’s anointed Messiah and at that time the “kingdom of God” would be come an earthly reality. In other words, the Jews expected that the Messianic kingdom would occur when the Messiah appeared. (Part 2)<sup>17</sup> Coinciding with this would be divine wrath upon the wicked nations of “this age” and the Messianic King would establish justice and peace in the world from that moment onward and “the age to come” would be a reality. Themes in Isaiah reflect this understanding and hope among the Jews, and it is reflected in the New Testament as well.

Isaiah 2:1-4, 1: “The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2: Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. 3: And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4: And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.”

Isaiah 9:6-7, 6: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7: There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with

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<sup>17</sup> Continued on page 13

justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”

Isaiah 65:9, "I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, And an heir of My mountains from Judah; Even My chosen ones shall inherit it, And My servants will dwell there. “

Isaiah 65:17-25, 17: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. 18: "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing And her people *for* gladness. 19: "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; And there will no longer be heard in her The voice of weeping and the sound of crying. 20: "No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few days*, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be *thought* accursed. 21: "They will build houses and inhabit *them*; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. 22: "They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, *so will be* the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. 23: "They will not labor in vain, Or bear *children* for calamity; For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, And their descendants with them. 24: "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. 25: "The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD.

Isaiah 66:22-24, 22: "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure. 23: "And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD. "Then they will go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. 24: For their worm will not die And their fire will not be quenched; And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind."

Luke 2:25-26, 25: “And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26: And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.”

Luke 2:36-38, 36: “And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with *her* husband seven years after her marriage, 37: and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 38: At that very moment she came up and *began* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Matthew 24:1-3, 1: “Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. 2: And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." 3: As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

II Peter 3:13, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

Revelation 21:1-5, 1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. 2: And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3: And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4: and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." 5: And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He \*said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

C. Jesus taught that the "kingdom of God", a reality of the "age to come" had entered "the present age" in His Own person for the redemption of mankind in this age and when the time for the redemption process was complete, He would return to initiate the "age to come". In Jesus, The "Kingdom of God" was at hand.

However, in the appearing of Jesus and His unexpected work of redemption, there now became a transition or modification between this age and the age to come. This was not anticipated in Jewish thought. It was and is rejected by many Jews to this day. But His presence became the bridge or tie between the two ages. The extent, nature and character of this "bridge" has often taken different forms depending on the premises of the interpreter.

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Matthew 12:28

"Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you." Matthew 21:31

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. Matthew 21:43

"Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14-15

"And He said, 'How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? *It is* like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE.'" [a growing reality upon the earth begun with heavenly seeds (God's word)] Mark 4:30-32

“...for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." Luke 22:16-18

“Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after *them*." "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. "Remember Lot's wife. "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it. "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."] And answering they *said to Him*, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered." Luke 17:20-37

“While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return. "And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business *with this* until I come *back*.' "But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' "When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. "The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' "The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did

not sow.' "He \*said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 'Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?' "Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' "And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas *already*.' "I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. "But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Luke 19:11-28

“And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.” Luke 23”50-52

“Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus \*said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:3-5

“To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3

The preaching of the early church emphasized the “kingdom of God”

“But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” Acts 8:12

“After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." Acts 14:21-22

“And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God.” Acts 19:8

“When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.” Acts 28:23

“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.” Acts 28:30-31

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus....” Titus 2:11-13

D. Since the presence of the kingdom of God had entered history in the person of Jesus, after His ascension this presence was continued by the Holy Spirit and power. This is noted in Paul’s writing.

Romans 8:18-23, 18: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19: For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20: For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21: that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22: For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23: And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

II Corinthians 1:21-22, 21: “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22: who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

II Corinthians 5:4-5, 4: “For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5: Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”

Ephesians 1:13-14, 13: “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14: who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.”

B. (Part 2) Coinciding with the Messianic appearance would be divine wrath upon the wicked nations of “this age”. This is frequently taught in the Old Testament and comprises much of the Jewish “hope”.

Psalms 2:1-12, 1: “Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? 2: The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3: "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" 4: He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord

scoffs at them. 5: Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6: "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." 7: "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8: 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. 9: 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" 10: Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11: Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12: Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Psalms 79:6-10, 6: Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You, And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name. 7: For they have devoured Jacob And laid waste his habitation. 8: Do not remember the iniquities of *our* forefathers against us; Let Your compassion come quickly to meet us, For we are brought very low. 9: Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake. 10: Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight, Vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed.

Jeremiah 10:10-11, 10: But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation. 11: Thus you shall say to them, "The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens."

Micah 5:10-15, 10: "It will be in that day," declares the LORD, "That I will cut off your horses from among you And destroy your chariots. 11: "I will also cut off the cities of your land And tear down all your fortifications. 12: "I will cut off sorceries from your hand, And you will have fortune-tellers no more. 13: "I will cut off your carved images And your *sacred* pillars from among you, So that you will no longer bow down To the work of your hands. 14: "I will root out your Asherim from among you And destroy your cities. 15: "And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath On the nations which have not obeyed."

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Nahum 1:2-7, 2: "A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. 3: The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And the LORD will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet. 4: He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; He dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither; The blossoms of Lebanon wither. 5: Mountains quake because of Him And the hills dissolve; Indeed the earth is upheaved by His presence, The world and all the inhabitants in it. 6: Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is

poured out like fire And the rocks are broken up by Him. 7: The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him.

Zephaniah 1:14-18, 14: "Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15: A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16: A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17: I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. 18: Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth. "

E. This "day of God's wrath" came to be associated with "The Day of The Lord" and this is accompanied by signs in the "heavens".

Joel 2:1-2, 1: Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, 2: A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Joel 2:28-32, 28: "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. 29: "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30: "I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. 31: "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 32: "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

Amos 8:9, "It will come about in that day," declares the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight."<sup>18</sup>

F. The New Testament carries this theme through, but adds to it the understanding that this is also the resurrection age spoken of by Daniel the prophet,

Daniel 12:1-4, 1: "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people,

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<sup>18</sup> See also: Isa. 13:10; Isa. 24:20-23; Jer.4:23-25; Jer. 4:28; Eze.32:7; Amos 5:20

everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt. 3: "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

Matthew 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Mark 13:24-25, 24: "But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, 25: AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.

Luke 21:25-26, 25: "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26: men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.<sup>19</sup>

II Peter 3:12, "... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"

G. In carrying this theme through, the New Testament but adds to it the understanding that this is also the resurrection age spoken of by Daniel the prophet,

Daniel 12:1-4, 1: "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt. 3: "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. 4: "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

Luke 20:34-36, 34: "Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35: but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36: for they

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<sup>19</sup> See also: Acts 2:19-20; 2Peter 3:10-12; Rev. 6:12-14, Rev. 20:11

cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

John 5:24-29, 24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27: and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. 28: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29: and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Acts 24:14-15, 14: "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets; 15: having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

I Corinthians 15:21-25, "For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. 22: For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. 23: But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, 24: then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25: For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Hebrews 11:35, 39-40, 35: "Women received *back* their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection... 39: And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40: because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

H. The form that this "Day of God's wrath" or "Day of The Lord" would take is often based on the Egyptian captivity and Passover. Several times God mentions Egypt as He considers how to bring discipline, repentance and correction to His people. In Jewish apocalyptic literature, this is the predominant portrait of God's wrath upon the "wickedness of this age" and the establishment of His kingdom for the "righteous".

Amos 4:9-13, 9: "I smote you with scorching *wind* and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. 10: "I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me," declares the LORD. 11: "I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have

not returned to Me," declares the LORD. 12: "Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." 13: For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind And declares to man what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness And treads on the high places of the earth, The LORD God of hosts is His name.

Micah 7:12-20, 12: It *will be* a day when they will come to you From Assyria and the cities of Egypt, From Egypt even to the Euphrates, Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain. 13: And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants, On account of the fruit of their deeds. 14: Shepherd Your people with Your scepter, The flock of Your possession Which dwells by itself in the woodland, In the midst of a fruitful field. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old.

15: "As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt, I will show you miracles." 16: Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might. They will put *their* hand on *their* mouth, Their ears will be deaf. 17: They will lick the dust like a serpent, Like reptiles of the earth. They will come trembling out of their fortresses; To the LORD our God they will come in dread And they will be afraid before You. 18: Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. 19: He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. 20: You will give truth to Jacob *And* unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old.

Haggai 2:5-7, 5: 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!' 6: "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. 7: 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

I. God's people are protected from His final outpouring of wrath upon the nations in Revelation (chapters 8-16) much as they were during the Passover.<sup>20</sup>

Romans 5:9, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him."

1Thesalonians 1:10, "...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is* Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."

1Thessalonians 5:9, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,..."

J. The wrath of God also includes the final judgment.

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<sup>20</sup> This pattern of protection in the midst of God's wrath (when it wasn't upon Israel) is frequent in the Old Testament. Noah and the flood, Lot and his family, The Passover, The fiery furnace, The Lion's den, etc.

John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 5:24-29, 24:"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27: and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man. 28: "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29: and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."

II Thessalonians 1<sup>7</sup>b-10, 7b: "...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8: dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9: These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10: when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed."

K. The Thessalonians had apparently been taught by the missionaries, that they were to look for the appearance of the Lord from heaven (the sky - I Thess. 1:10) who would rescue them from God's wrath. This "wrath" would come upon the wickedness of this age. Then they would experience the kingdom of God and the reign of His Messiah. The Jewish element of this congregation looked for this event to occur immediately. Others weren't so sure. There grew a wide debate and confusion about all this, and it encompassed concern about those who had died before the appearance of The Messiah to initiate this wrath and establish the kingdom of God upon earth. The expectation of the Jews is carried into the New Testament, but the Messianic work of redemption and a period of repentance unto faith which would delay the establishment of the kingdom upon the earth was not a part of Jewish belief according to their traditions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> However, many Jews held a belief in a great persecution of God's people and an apostasy prior to the "parousia" of the Messiah and establishing of the Messianic kingdom. This persecution and apostasy would be led by a sinister personage. This will be discussed during the study in II Thessalonians.

Note:

Matthew 3:7-10, 7: But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8: "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; 9: and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10: "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every Rom 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.

John 3:35-36, 35: "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 3:3-7, 3: For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4: When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. 5: Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6: For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7: and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

Revelation 6:12-17, 12: "I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13: and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14: The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15: Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16: and they \*said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17: for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

II Peter 3:1-10, 1: "This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2: that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. 3: Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, 4: and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell

asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5: For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, 6: through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7: But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8: But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9: The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

L. In addition to the delay the Jews did not anticipate, the actual coming of the Messiah (Christ's second coming in the N.T.) is seen also as at a time the world does not expect.

Matthew 24:42-44, 42: "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43: "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44: "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*.

I Thessalonians 5:1-6, 1: "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2: For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3: While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4: But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5: for you are all **sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;** 6: **so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.**

Revelation 3:3, "So, remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you."

Revelation 16:15, ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

## **END OF EXCURSUS**

## CHAPTER TWO

2:1-4

1: For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, 2: but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. 3: For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; 4: but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

1: Paul returns to describing the character and integrity of the mission he, Silas, Timothy and others had among them. There still continues a flavor of defense as if the authenticity of his work there is under scrutiny. "...not in vain" (empty, futile, without results).

2: Severe injury in Philippi could have discouraged them from continuing, but their coming to Thessalonica and facing further persecution demonstrates the importance of their message and the validity of them as apostles. It is unlikely that people would preach a deceptive or false message when facing suffering because of it. So this perseverance is proof of their genuine ministry. "...gospel of God..." is a phrase used in seven other places, thrice in this letter.

<sup>22</sup>

3: "Exhortation", "παρακλησις" ("para-klay-sis") is a word used to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It includes the ideas of encouragement, comfort, motivating, urging, exhorting, (cheering one on), appealing, consoling and so forth. It was brought to them apart from "error" (a made up or distorted theology), "impurity" (an action based in unclean (perhaps for the Jews) or immoral ("fleshly lust") motives, and "deceit", (a hidden agenda derived from the ideas of a lure to deceive and thus catch fish).

4: "'Approved' by God"... The word is "δοκημαζω" ("doe-kay-mahd-zo"). The root of this word means, "to be proved by testing". So "approved" is indicates they have earned being entrusted with the Gospel. Thus the following statement makes more sense and fits the context. Their goal is sincerely desiring to please God, not men and their benefit comes thusly and not by men. So their motives are pure.

2:5-12

5: For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--6: nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 7: But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children. 8: Having so fond an affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to

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<sup>22</sup> See: 2:8-9

you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. 9: For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10: You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11: just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, 12: so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

5: Continuing in defense of himself and his fellow workers, Paul continues in the same vein, reiterating some of the same thoughts from verses three and four. “Flattering speech”. Flattery is always thought of in negative ways in the Scriptures. Psalm 5:9 states, “There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction *itself*. Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue.” Likewise Psalm 12:2, “They speak falsehood to one another; With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.” Proverbs 26:28 notes, “A lying tongue hates those it crushes, And a flattering mouth works ruin. Paul gives his own view of flattery in Romans 16:18 where he writes, “...For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.” It is in this context he tells the Thessalonians the manner in which he did not come to them. Jude 1:16 holds this same view, “These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their *own* lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of *gaining an* advantage.”

6: Paul and his fellow apostles did not seek to be elevated in some way by men. Paul and Barnabas were horrified when the citizens of Lystra tried to make them into gods on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-18). They sought no human advantage, position, recognition, wealth or fame. So unlike so many modern pastors and teachers. Note the use of the term “apostle” applying to Silvanus and Timothy, and possibly to any who were with the missionary party.

“...as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.” He is indicating that his band of followers could have requested support and accommodations apostleship, but chose not to do so, although it was perfectly acceptable and proper.<sup>23</sup> The word “authority” here does not mean “power”, “rulership” or leadership to which another should submit. The KJV actually is closer to the Greek, “...nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.”

7. “We proved to be gentle among you...”. “Proved” is the general word “γίνομαι” (“hard ‘g’ - gin-oh-my”). It is derived from the root, “to generate”, “give birth to”, “become” or “bring to pass”. “Gentle” is “mild”, “affable” and “kind” – unpretentious, undemanding. The illustration of a “nursing (or better, “nurturing”) mother pictures their deportment toward the church. The point is that this is different that others who represent themselves as somebody.

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<sup>23</sup> I Corinthians 9:3-18; II Corinthians 11:9-15; II Thessalonians 3:7-9

8. “Affection” in the Greek carries with it the idea of elevating them in esteem and love. “Lives” is “ψυχή” (“psu-che”) often translated “souls”. It is used in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew (“neshamah”), the “breath” of life. He means that they gave them the very breath of their lives, their very souls. “Very dear” – our “beloved”. “...gospel of God...”<sup>24</sup>

9. “*how*” – a supplied word, but the meaning would be better understood with: “*while*”. One of the earmarks of Paul and his associates is their insistence in providing for themselves financially so their message would not be attacked on the pretense of their greed. They came to give and not to receive. II Corinthians 11 displays Paul’s passionate feelings on the matter. “Hardship” is used by the apostle to indicate persecution and suffering, pain and travail.<sup>25</sup>

10: Paul continues to argue that their ministry was not only legitimate ministry but of God. The argument establishing the legitimacy of their mission and message is intended to demonstrate that God is in all of it, and it is not from ambitious or manipulative men. “Devoutly” is “in holiness”; “uprightly” means “righteously”, that is without dissimulation. “Toward you believers”, suggesting that those opposed would not make this judgment.

11. The illustration is similar to that in verse seven. Here he uses the idea of a father who cheers on his children to excellence. “Exhorting” is “παρακαλεω” (“para-ka-le-oh”) used in a variety of ways but having the root meaning of “coming alongside to help”; “encouraging” is “παραμυθεομαι” (“para-mew-theh-oh-my”) meaning to “comfort”, “console” or “stimulate to courage”; “imploring” is “μαρτυρομαι” (“mar-tour-oh-my”), meaning “to testify” “witness” or literally, lay one’s life on the line or implore others to do so.

12: Their goal was nothing else except that the results of their ministry would be to promote their “worthy” walk before God. This verse could be the “key” verse for both of the letters to the church at Thessalonica, if not in all of Paul’s writings as well as the purpose of his life and ministry.<sup>26</sup> “Worthy” means to conduct one’s life in a manner appropriate to their identity. The root word projects the idea of adding a weight to one side of a set of scales (already weighted on the other side) to balance them or bring them to equilibrium. Our lives are too have “equilibrium” with the weight of our calling. Another use would be to obtain a cart appropriate to the load it is to carry. The cart must be “worthy” of the load.<sup>27</sup> “kingdom” suggests a present aspect while “glory” suggests a future consummation.

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<sup>24</sup> See also: 2:2; Mark 1:14; Romans 1:1, 15:16; II Cor. 11:7; I Peter 4:7

<sup>25</sup> Note also: II Thess. 3:8 “...nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;...” Also, II Cor. 6:1-10, 12:12-13.

<sup>26</sup> Paul desired above all else that his work for Christ would not be “in vain”. See: I Thess. 3:5; I Cor. 15:1-3, 10-14, 15:58; II Co. 6:1-10; Gal. 2:2, 4:11; and especially Philippians 2:14-16.

<sup>27</sup> This theme is common to Paul. See: 4:1-12; Col. 1:10; Romans 16:2; II Cor. 5:9-11; Philip. 1:9-10, 1:27; Ephesians 4:1; II Thessalonians 1:11; etc.

2:13-16

13: For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. 14: For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, 15: who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, 16: hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

13-14: As opposed to the “flattering speech” of verse 5. Paul makes it clear that their words were God’s words, and they accepted them as such. Further, the result of their belief in those words caused them to become imitators of other believers,<sup>28</sup> in that they are now suffering the same persecution the believers in Judea suffered. He specifies the Judean believers implying that he may be speaking more directly to Jewish converts. They have suffered persecution as do all Jews who have turned to Christ. (See: also 1:6 “imitators”)

15-16a: Paul is definitely speaking of the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. The “Jerusalem conference” has already taken place and the missionaries are free to evangelize the Gentiles. The reference to “the Gentiles” again suggest he is addressing the Jewish converts.

16b. “...they always fill up the measure of their sins.” They are completing the evil their “fathers” began and it includes the context of verses 14-16.<sup>29</sup> “But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.” “Wrath” is “or-gay”, the common word usually translated as such and the same word used in 1:10. Literally the sentence reads, “But, anticipated beforehand, wrath *is* upon them to the end (conclusion or to the uttermost). The intent of

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<sup>28</sup> They, themselves, are evidence that God alone is the source of the ministry, mission and message of the apostles.

<sup>29</sup> Note: Matthew 23:27-36, 27: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28: “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 29: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30: and, say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’ 31: “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32: “*Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers*”. 33: “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? 34: “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, 35: so that upon you may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36: “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” See also: Acts 7:52.

Paul is to point out that these Jews (verse 14) will be under God's wrath from now until it's fulfillment in the age to come.

2:17-20

17: But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while--in person, not in spirit--were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18: For we wanted to come to you--I, Paul, more than once--and yet Satan hindered us. 19: For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20: For you are our glory and joy.

17: "...taken away from you..." (Acts 17:10-15) and the word is from "ορφανιζω" ("or-phan-id-zo") from which we get the word "orphan". Paul sees them as their children Whom they have unwillingly "orphaned".

18: "Satan hindered us". "Hindered" is literally, "to cut a trench or moat between someone and their goal". The same word is used in Galatians 5:7. Here, Paul is referring to circumstances brought about by the persecution of the Jews and their attempts to stifle or even kill Paul and his companions. In Acts 17:5-9,<sup>30</sup> the Jews, unable to locate Paul and Silas, dragged Jason (their host) before the authorities and under threat, extracted a pledge from Jason amounting to a restriction disallowing Paul and his band return to Thessalonic without reporting it. As William Ramsey put it, "This interpretation of the term "Satan," as denoting action taken by the governing power against the message from God, is in keeping with the figurative use of the word throughout the New Testament."<sup>31</sup>

19: The word "crown" is "victory wreath" (from: "stephanos") "of exultation" (boasting, pride, etc.) . In this rhetorical question Paul is expressing that, in spite of Satan's interference they are, and will be, the source of their hope, joy and exultation. "...in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" This phrase refers to Jesus' return as judge, and reassures the church that it is an event yet to occur.

The word "coming" is "παρουσια" ("par-ou-see-ah") with the accent on "see". This is an important word as it is used four times by Jesus in Matthew 24 to indicate His second coming.<sup>32</sup> It is used by Him or quoted of Him at no other time, but He does employ other words as well. It is also used twenty more times in the N.T.; fourteen times by Paul, twice by James, Three times by Peter and once in I John.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Acts 17:5-9, 5: "But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6: When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7: and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8: They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9: And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them."

<sup>31</sup> "St. Paul the Traveler", Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1920, Page 231.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39.

Paul uses similar language in Philippians 2:14-16 when he says, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.” The term “day of Christ” refers to the same “parousia”.<sup>34</sup> Paul uses the word “parousia” seven times in I and II Thessalonians, all with reference to this event.

### CHAPTER THREE

3:1-10

1: Therefore when we could endure *it* no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, 2: and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3: so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4: For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. 5: For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain. 6: But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7: for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8: for now we *really* live, if you stand firm in the Lord. 9: For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, 10: as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?

1-2: Referring to Acts 17:15-16.<sup>35</sup> Paul had sent for Timothy and Silas after he had arrived in Athens with some unnamed “brethren”. Only Timothy (accompanied by some brothers) was able to come to Paul in Athens at this time and brought news that the church at Thessalonica was deeply concerned about Paul's condition after all the persecution. Further, the church was itself being attacked and persecuted (1:6, 2:14). Paul, in turn, became concerned and that their faith may be wavering (3:5). Following Timothy's arrival at Athens, Paul tells him he is going to Corinth and then sends him

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<sup>33</sup> See: **I Cor. 15:23**, 16:17; II Cor. 7:6-7, 10:10; Philippians 1:26, 2:12; **I Thessalonians 2:19, 3:13, 4:15, 5:23; II Thessalonians 2:1, 2:8-9; James 5:7-8**; II Peter 1:16, 3:4, 3:12; **I John 2:28**. (Bold type indicates specific references to Jesus' coming again)

<sup>34</sup> See also: I Corinthians 1:8, 5:5; II Corinthians 1:14; Ephesians 4:30; Phil. 1:6, 2:16; I Thess. 5:2.

<sup>35</sup> Repeated from the introduction, pages two and three.

back to Thessalonica to “strengthen and encourage” the church. This decision was made for two reasons: A. The Thessalonians were so concerned for Paul’s health and welfare that Paul wanted them to be reassured so their faith would not be shaken. B. Paul was likewise concerned about their standing in the midst of persecution and worry over him.

“Disturbed” is from σαίνω, "sah-ee-no" primarily describing a dog wagging its tail. Paul did not want them shaken or tossed back and forth.

3-4. “These afflictions<sup>36</sup>” – mentioned in chapter two. Paul points out that their faith need not be shaken because he and his companions had suffered so grievously. “Destined” is not “predestined” but more “an expected result” or “inevitability” - literally, “lie outstretched out on the ground”. Indeed, they were told in advance this would be the outcome of their ministry and message.<sup>37</sup>

5. Sent Timothy from Athens back to Thessalonica. Then Paul, together with the remaining brothers, began the journey to Corinth.

“The tempter” is a primary verb “πειραζω” (“pay-rahdz-oh”) based on the preposition “hoo-per” meaning “beyond”, “across”, “to the limit”. Temptation stretches one “to the limit or breaking point” with the purpose of rendering a person ineffective in whatever good they are trying to accomplish.<sup>38</sup> This would render the effort of Paul and his companions ineffective as well.

6-7: After nearly two months, Timothy arrives back in Corinth with Silas and probably Aristarchus. (See Acts 19:29). His report to Paul is not as serious as Paul had imagined it and Paul writes back to them in this epistle. The news Timothy brought was a great relief and comfort to the apostle.

8. “*really* live” – the italics are supplied by the translator. “Live” is “za-oh”, which Paul employs to mean “having a motive or energy to continue on”. “Stand firm” – stationary, not moved through temptation.

9: Paul reiterates his great joy and inadequate thanks (before God) at the news of their steadfast perseverance in the Lord despite persecution and affliction. He takes no credit for this, but attributes it to the power God’s word had in their lives.

10: Reflecting verse six in the mutual desire to see one another again, the missionaries “earnestly” pray that this will be the case. “Earnestly” is intensely, superabundantly. He uses the word “υπερεκπερισσου” (hoo-per-ek-pear-ris-sou). From the prefix we get the English prefix “hyper”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> From: “θλιψις”, the same word frequently translated “tribulation”.

<sup>37</sup> See Acts 14:22

<sup>38</sup> See: II Peter 1:5-11; I Timothy 6:9-11; Galatians 6:1

<sup>39</sup> See comment on verse 5 above.

His thanksgiving is in anticipation of this reuniting so the missionaries can “complete what is lacking in their faith”. This means Paul desires to fill in areas in which they are lacking. In their case this included their need to understand how one reconciles God’s love with suffering and evil, the ultimate disposition of evil, and how to conduct their lives in the midst of evil.

3:11-13

11: Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;  
12: and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; 13: so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

11: Paul now inserts a prayer based on their mutual desire to be reunited. This prayer is answered over four years later in the narrative of the book of Acts during the third missionary journey (Acts20:1-3).

12: This prayer once again reflects Paul’s desire that they “walk in a manner worthy of their calling”. The word “love” is “agape”. His prayer is that they will abound in love not just for each other (including Jew and Gentile mutually) but for all people.

13: “Establish” their hearts is to “strengthen”, “make fast”, “confirm” a word from which we get the noun “steroids”. “Without blame”, that their hearts will not be the cause for faltering in their walk. “Holiness before God...” – set apart for God’s use. The cause for verse 13 are verses 11-12. It could read, “May our coming to you to fill what is lacking in your faith as well as the increase of your love for everyone within the fellowship and without be the means whereby God stabilizes and sets your hearts to His purposes above all else in preparation for the coming of Jesus with all His saints.”

“At the coming of our Lord Jesus...”. Again, “παρουσια”. Assuring the church that, 1. Jesus shall appear again and 2. They need to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to their identity to be prepared for His coming. “...with all His saints” (“holy ones”. A common theme to the Jews as it recalls Zechariah 14:5.<sup>40</sup>

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

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<sup>40</sup> “You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!” Paul uses the term “οι αγιοι” as does the LXX. See also: Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:9-10; Mark 8:38; Matthew 16:27, 25:31; Jude 1:14; II Thessalonians 1:7. The term “holy ones” has generally been interpreted in this passage to mean one of three things: 1. The angels of God, 2. The redeemed believers having been previously “raptured” and now are returning with Jesus (in contrast to II Thess. 1:7 for example) and, 3. Both angels and the redeemed.

#### 4:1-8

1: Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. 2: For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority of* the Lord Jesus. 3: For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4: that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5: not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6: *and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the avenger* in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. 7: For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8: So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.

1. For the third time Paul repeats this exhortation. He is drawing the letter to a conclusion (“finally”) and reiterates his main purpose for writing. He “requests” and “exhorts” (beseeches and implores) them to excel even beyond the “instructions” given to them at their visit. “Walk” is used twice in this sentence and is “περιπατεω” (peri-pah-tay-oh) meaning, “to conduct one’s life”.

2: “commandments”, not as in the law but “παπαγγελια” (pah-rah-ang-gee-ah) meaning “instruction” or “charge”. “*the authority of*” – implied. From what follows, a considerable amount of this was in regard to sexual conduct.

3: Paul spends eight verses on the key issue with which the conduct of the Thessalonian church needs to comply. This is the issue of sexual conduct. It directly affects their “sanctification”. “Sanctification” is the Greek word “αγιασμος” (hahg-ee-ahs-mos) from which the root holiness in various forms is derived. It means to be “set apart solely for God’s purposes”. Paul knows this is God’s will regarding the sexual aspect of a person’s life. Primarily speaking to Gentiles, Jews are not excluded, however. “Immorality” includes harlotry, adultery, fornication and all forms of sexual perversion and depravity.

4: Included in God’s will is that each person “know how to possess his (or her) own vessel in sanctification and honor”. “Vessel”, in this context, is the sexual organs of either gender and reflects the idea of a container (probably a clay pot or jar) from which something is either poured out or something is poured in. “Sanctification” (see paragraph above) and “honor” (to “value it as a treasure”).

5: Among the pagans sexual immorality was a common practice and often was included in the religious practice in Greco-Roman temples.

6: “Transgress” is to “step beyond a forbidden boundary”. “Defraud” is to “take advantage of and injure”. Sexual misconduct damages others than those so engaged. This is not in accord with Christian deportment. “The avenger” is literally, “from or out of right(eousness). The meaning is to “make right” or “execute justice”.

From this verse, it is clear that Paul and his companions warned the church against sexual immorality while at Thessalonica. As in many churches, where Gentiles came to Christ, this theme is regularly dealt with.<sup>41</sup>

7: God's call is to "sanctification" (see commentary on verse 3 above) not to "ακαθαρσια" (ah-kah-thar-sia) – physical and moral uncleanness. Paul refers to the condition of both the mind and the body.

8: If this counsel, though from a man, is rejected or "despised", it is actually a rejection of God's counsel as Paul is only conveying the word and will of God Himself.

4:9-12

9: Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10: for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11: and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12: so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

9-10: Paul again repeats his instruction for them to love one another (3:12) and that they excel even more (4:1).

11-12: The upcoming section (along with II Thessalonians 3:6-13) lends credence to the idea that Timothy had indicated to Paul that some in Thessalonica were failing to be consistent in work and demeanor and outsiders were being negatively impressed about these "Christians". For some, the expected and immanent return of Christ motivated them to wait in idleness expecting others to support them. They seemed to also be interfering in an unduly manner in other's lives ("business"). "Lead a quiet life" means "keep to your own affairs and do not be meddlesome".

4:13-18

13: But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15: For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we, who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise

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<sup>41</sup> See: I Corinthians 5:1-5, 7:1 ff.; Ephesians 5:3-6; Galatians 5:19-21; Col. 3:5-6; etc.

first. 17: Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18: Therefore comfort one another with these words.

13-14: This opening statement suggests there were already speculations, misinformation, and conflicting thoughts on the matters regarding those now “asleep” in Christ. “Those who are asleep” is a euphemistic phrase describing those who, having true faith in Christ, have died prior to His return. It pictures lying at rest. There was great concern among the believers at Thessalonica about the disposition of these departed saints.

Some take the word “asleep” to mean that their “spirits” literally “sleep” awaiting resurrection while others see it as a euphemism of those who have already ascended to be with Christ and will return with Him. Some interpret the phrase “bring with Him” as bringing those “sleeping ones” to resurrection life with their predecessor Jesus while others interpret it to mean that Jesus brings those “raptured” saints with Him at His return.

15-17: Paul is speaking of the coming of Christ and the order of ascension when both the faithful living and dead will be taken up to meet Him in the air. The ascent of the living will not precede the resurrection of the faithful dead. So the dead will be raised first and then the living will be caught up to meet Him in the air. The purpose of this statement is to bring comfort to them. This comfort (“para-ka-leh-oh” again) can also be translated “encouragement”. It is a flexible word fitting any one of various spiritual needs the hearts of people need at the moment.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

5:1-3

1: Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2: For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3: While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

1: “Times and epochs...”, are in the Greek, των χρονος και των καιρων (“tone chro-nohne kai tone kai-rohn”) and the first indicates a space or season of time and the second indicates the beginning of an important period of time noteworthy for special characteristics or events.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Note: Acts 1:6-7, “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" Act 1:7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;...”

“no need...” Paul and his team had already discussed these things with them (II Thessalonians 2:5). Their reference point would be Old Testament prophecies and the teachings of Jesus and perhaps rabbinical thought. The New Testament, of course is not written yet.

2: “full well” is “thoroughly”. “...day of the Lord” refers them to the many Old Testament passages such as Joel 1:15, “Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.”<sup>43</sup> It is to be a great day of destruction (verse three).

“Thief in the night”. This phrase is not found in the Old Testament. However, the ideas of “sudden” and “unexpectedly” it depicts is found in the Old Testament.<sup>44</sup> Jesus used the idea of the “unexpected” or of a “thief” in his teaching about His return to depict the same thing.<sup>45</sup> However, this term is unique to Paul. But though it comes upon the world like in this manner, the “saints” are aware of this and are not caught by surprise (verse 4). The exact day is not known but anticipation for this sudden and generally unexpected arrival is known so the saints will not be caught unprepared or not ready. That is why saints are prompted to “keep watch” or be “alert”.<sup>46</sup>

3: “...they - them”, those of, or, in the “darkness”, who “sleep” and get “drunk” as Paul describes in verses 5-7. “...peace and safety” a phrase reflecting Jeremiah 6:14; Ezekiel 13:10; and perhaps Jesus intent in Luke 17:26-30, and especially Luke 21:34-35, meaning unaware, unprepared or complacent. “...labor pains”, a phrase used in the Old Testament reflecting not the suddenness of it so much as the anguish. See: Psalm 48:6; Isaiah 21:3-4; Jeremiah 4:31, 6:24, 13:21-22, 22:23; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9-10. Jesus used this picture in Matthew 24:4-8.

5 :4-6

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<sup>43</sup> See Excursus, pages 14-15 ff. for more passages.

<sup>44</sup> Malachi 3:1-5, 1: "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. 2: "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3: "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. 4: "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. 5: "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts." Also, Isa. 29:5-6; Jer. 6:22-30; Jer. 15:6-8; Hab. 2:1-20.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 24:50; 25:13; Luke 12:40; Rev. 3:3, 16:15.

<sup>46</sup> Matthew 24:42-44, 42: "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43: "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44: "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*".

4: But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;  
5: for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;  
6: so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7: For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

4: See comment on verse 2.

5: "...light", "day", "darkness", "night". These are contrasting terms used as metaphors. In the case of "light" and "day" we have a Hebrew parallelism depicting truth, awareness, soberness, readiness, and the like. "Sons of..." means that the saints are actually born into the "daylight" and have the character of "light". When Jesus said, "I Am the Light of the world", he was using this term in the same way. Conversely, "darkness" and "night" depict "blindness", "ignorance", "foolishness", "lack of awareness", etc.

6: i.e. "do not be persuaded to slip into the darkness of the world." "Alert", - again, see comment on verse 2.

7: Paul now illustrates the figurative by the factual. Nighttime is the time people both get drunk and sleep. Jesus used this same picture.<sup>47</sup> In our awaiting the return of Jesus, we are neither to "sleep", or be "drunk" returning to the figurative.

5:8-11

8: But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9: For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10: who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11: Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

8: The awareness of the children of the "day" consists of: "being sober" – meaning having the senses alert and not dulled as by wine; "having put on" - a participle indicating a pre-existing but continuing reality of wearing the breastplate of "faith" and "love". This is different from Paul's use of this metaphor in Ephesians 6:14 where he quotes Isaiah 59:17. Here, as children of "light" we are to characterize - not a defense against attack, but the characteristics that bring those to salvation who would otherwise be subject to the wrath of God. The helmet here is the same as Ephesians 6:17 and Isaiah 59:17 and is the helmet of "salvation" symbolizing a preserved and protected "hope". Verse 8 is a contrast to verse 9.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Matthew 24:46-51, 46: "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47: "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48: "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49: and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50: the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, 51: and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Parallel: Luke 12 45-46)

<sup>48</sup> Paul uses this type of analogy often. See: Romans 13:12; II Corinthians 6:7, 10:4; Ephesians 6:13-17.

9: As a contrast to verses 3-8, this verse gives the bottom line regarding the conduct of those of “light” versus those of “darkness”. “Wrath”, God’s appointed time – see comment on 1:10 and the excursus that follows chapter 1. “Salvation” is simply the general term for: “rescue” and “safety” in Christ, and does not depict an event. It does depict, however, an eternal enjoyment of His company rather than the anguish of those without salvation as they suffer the wrath of God.

10: “who died for us”... Paul employs this phrase to reassure his readers that Jesus’ death removed the threat of God’s wrath for those who have come to believe in Him. He repeats what he said in 1:10 and says it also in Romans 5:9.

“...whether we are awake or asleep” ... Paul unites both living and departed saints together in the same hope and expectation of “life” together with Him. This refers to the real post-resurrection “life” Jesus now enjoys.

11: The point of the entire dissertation is to allay their fears and apprehensions and grant them confidence and rest in their hearts. In 4:13, Paul does not wish them to, “grieve as those who have no hope.” This is the context of the dissertation and the reason he wrote it. Rather they are to “build up” one another, that is, as a building is carefully constructed.

5:12-15

12: But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13: and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14: We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15: See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

12-13a: Paul now begins the conclusion of his letter with final instructions to them. Verses 12-15 relate to others. 16-22 relates to each person individually. “...appreciate” is “know” or “recognize”. It is an unnecessary attempt to translate “oida” as “appreciate”, since verse 13 carries this idea. “...have charge over you”. Is it possible that during one of the visits of Timothy to Thessalonica that Paul instructed that elders be placed in the church to hold it together? This was common and not unlikely. The term “have charge” is “pro-his-ti-mee” meaning to “stand before” you. These are definitely teachers or instructors and could be “elders”. “Instruction” is literally “put in the mind”. They are to be “held in honor beyond measure.” They are to respect those who instruct them “in the Lord” in a different way perhaps, than those who are not in the Lord.

“Live at peace”... do that which alleviates or eliminates conflict. Peace is the opposite of war or conflict. This does not mean to seek “peace at any price”. There is room, if warranted, for correction, confrontation and admonishment. But deliberating causing

conflict and dissention for little or no reason is the matter at hand. Living in peace is seeking what is best for the other person's state of mind, which suggests controlling one's impulses in order to avoid unnecessary conflict.

14: “..admonish” is the same word for “instruction” in verse 12. As they are taught (or influenced), so they are to teach (or influence) the “unruly” (confused, disorderly). “Encourage” is not the familiar “para-ka-leh-oh” here but “παραμυθεομαι” (para-mew-teh-oh-mai) meaning “to tell comforting stories” as a father would do for his children who are weak in heart and strength. The “weak” are those without strength in one way or another including physically, spiritually, morally, mentally and so on and the idea of “help” includes “holding onto and supporting” them. To be “patient” with everyone is to “withstand the heat”, that is don't allow someone to make you angry but be understanding of their situation.

15: Following be “patient” the idea here is not to allow another's behavior, even when evil, to inflame you so that you respond inflicting similar evil. The word “evil” here is “kah-kohs”, meaning “intent to injure”, “to be wicked” or “depraved”. This is different than “poh-nee-rohs” in verse 22 also translated “evil”. Here the word “evil” is used as a contrast to “good” which means “beneficial” as opposed to “injurious”. There is no place as a Christian where retaliation or revenge is permitted or acceptable.

5:16-22

16: Rejoice always; 17: pray without ceasing; 18: in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19: Do not quench the Spirit; 20: do not despise prophetic utterances. 21: But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; 22: abstain from every form of evil.

16: Paul now turns to one's personal life and conduct and emphasizes the spiritual. “rejoice always” – “be of good cheer”, “calmly glad” “at all times”, or in the midst of every situation. There is no need to worry.

17: The same regarding prayer. Prayer uninterrupted by whatever comes your way, at all times wherever you are and at whatever you are doing. Keep the lines open.

18: Again, the same regarding thanksgiving. Circumstances should not so dampen your spirits (or “The Spirit” – following verse) that you are unable to find a deep gratitude for what God has done for you. This is not thanksgiving “for all things” but in the midst of the whole experience of life.

19: “Quench” is “to extinguish” as water on a fire. This is a command. It could be translated “stop quenching the Spirit” referring to conduct or attitudes that prevent the Holy Spirit from becoming the dominant force and power in their lives

20-21: “despise” is “to count as having no value” or “to discount out of hand”. “Prophetic utterances” are literally “speaking of things to come” and reflects the discussions and disagreements among the church. But Paul does tell them to examine everything carefully, that is what is said and to hold fast that which is good. Literally, “to test or figure out” all things, including what is said (ostensibly because of so much diverse thought and teaching about the faith and anticipation of the future) and to “retain” or “keep in mind” that which is “good” (having value and worth). This “good” (kah-lohs) is not the same as verse 15 (aga-thohs) which is more the “act of goodness” or effective “good”.

22: “form” is “appearance”. This means to keep themselves from involvement in or conduct having any resemblance to “evil” which in this case (as opposed to verse 15) is “poh-nee-rhos” meaning “wickedness, degeneracy, lewdness or malice” reflecting Paul’s instruction in 4:3-8.

5:23-28

23: Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24: Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. 25: Brethren, pray for us. 26: Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. 27: I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren. 28: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

23: Paul now closes his letter with a benediction/prayer and greetings. This benediction is filled with many weighty phrases. God is seen as the “God of peace” no doubt to calm those in Thessalonica who are in turmoil or confusion. Paul appeals to God to “sanctify them entirely”. This means Paul desires God to be the one who causes them to consecrate themselves completely to Him. This means they should be separated to God and His purposes for their lives completely. “Entirely” has two nuances: 1. That they, in their entirety, be consecrated and 2. They be consecrated throughout their lives or until Jesus returns.

...“spirit”, “soul”, and “body” are mentioned to reference their entire being and are not intended to illustrate segmentation in the makeup of human beings. In this case the “spirit” reflects the heart and will, the “soul” is the “life force” or “vitality” often understood as the “breath of God”.

“without blame” is a result of consecration. “At the coming...” “parousia” when Jesus returns to gather His saints (or holy ones) and punish the wicked.

24: “Faithful...” another reassurance by Paul. God will accomplish the promises to which He has called them.

25: Paul asks them to reciprocate in praying for him and his companions as they have and are praying for the church at Thessalonica.

26: Paul writes this phrase so that each person will be welcomed into the fellowship of believers without discrimination. Often, as even today, men in the Mediterranean greet with a kiss or a simulation of a kiss on the cheek as a token of affection. The word kiss is "φιλημα" (phil-eh-mah) akin to the word for "brotherly love", "phil-eh-oh". I Peter 5:14 is in concert, "Greet one another with a kiss of love (agape)." This was a common greeting used by rabbis as well.

27: "I Adjure" is a strong word and is coupled with "in the Lord". Paul is insistent that this letter be read to everyone. It is almost a binding to do so. "...all the brethren" would include those not able to be present at the first reading and likely includes the believers at Berea as well.

28: Paul's common blessing as he closes most of his letters. "Grace" is God's "favor", "benefit", "joy" and "presence" in their lives and circumstances.

When this letter was complete, Paul sent it to Thessalonica by the hand of a trusted, but unnamed associate, possibly either Silas, Timothy or Aristarchus. The year is c. 52 A.D.. Nearly two months later Paul's messenger returns to Corinth with response and news from Thessalonica to which Paul writes a second letter.