



**Paul's Letters
to the Thessalonians**

SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND STUDY TO THESSALONIANS



Suggested reading: Acts 17:1 - 13

1.1 Introduction

These letters were Paul's first! We are living nearly two millennia after Paul penned these words to the believers in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica, yet the message is strikingly relevant for us. In this study we are going to learn about the circumstances surrounding the writing of these letters and understand the message being conveyed to those in Thessalonica. The primary reason we do such a study is so we can improve our own lives, strengthen our ecclesias and help others. In the rush to meet the deadline for this workbook we can run the risk of skimming over the most important part of the study... *meditation*. Meditation is simply thinking about what we are reading and going through the process of transforming it into something meaningful and practical.

The following saying really sums up all the advice needed when embarking on a Bible study:



1.2 Time of Writing

The first letter was written around A.D. 52, at the end of Paul's second missionary journey. The second letter was written approximately 6 months following the first.

When Paul wrote these letters, Agrippa II was ruler in Jerusalem and Claudius was Emperor in Rome.

1.3 Paul's Second Journey

To help us put these letters in context let's review what we know of Paul's second missionary journey. The *first* missionary journey lasted from AD 46 to 48 and was largely confined to the region of Galatia. This *second* missionary journey included a number of the same places visited in the first journey, but went far beyond into the regions of Asia and Macedonia. The second missionary journey was proposed not long after the Jerusalem council (AD50). The intent of the journey was clear;

"Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do". Acts 15:36

In addition to Paul's plan, God had other plans for Paul and his companions. They were to go into areas never before travelled to by Christians. This venture resulted in the growth of some of the most amazing ecclesia's the world has ever known.

Qa. Name some of the places where ecclesias were established as a result of this second missionary journey.

Qb. Why were the Bereans more noble than those in Thessalonians?

Qc. When involved in preaching work, what practical pointers can we take away from Paul's intentions recorded in Acts 15:36?

Preparations begin for the second missionary journey. They don't start out very smooth. A dispute arises between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41).

Qd. What history and factors contributed to such a disagreement?

Qe. How would you have reacted if you were Mark?

Barnabas and Mark, we are told, sailed for Cyprus. We do not hear of the work Barnabas and Mark, in fact, we hear nothing more of Barnabas in the remainder of the Acts record. Paul does mention him in some of his letters.

Qf. Find some of these references and summarise what you think the relationship between Paul and Barnabas was like towards the end of Paul's life.

Qg. What was the relationship between Paul and Mark like towards the end of Paul's life? What does this tell you about the character of Mark?

Paul teams up with Silas and they head for Syria and Cilicia. On the Map below, his journey is re-traced.

Qh. Very briefly summarise the notable events that took place at each centre during this second missionary journey.



<p>1. <i>Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41)</i></p>
<p>2. <i>Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1-5)</i></p> <p>Note: it was approximately 5 years since Paul first visited Lystra, it is possible that Timothy had accepted Christ during the first visit. We know of the close relationship between these two men, Paul describes him as 'my beloved son' (1 Cor 4:17)</p>
<p>3. <i>Troas (Acts 16:6-10)</i></p>

<i>4. Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)</i>
<i>5. Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)</i>
<i>6. Berea (Acts 17:10-15)</i>
<i>7. Athens (Acts 17:16-34)</i>
<i>8. Corinth (Acts 18:5)</i>
<i>9. Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21)</i>
<i>10. Caesarea and Antioch (Acts 18:22)</i>

Qi. From where did Paul write the First letter to the Thessalonians?

Qj. From where did Paul write the Second letter to the Thessalonians?

1.4 Thessalonica, the place

The city of Thessalonica is still in existence today, it is known as 'Salonika'. It is over 2000 years old, founded in the 4th century BC by Cassander, son of Alexander's great general. The city is named after Cassander's wife, who is half sister to Alexander the Great. The population of Thessalonica when Paul arrived was around 200,000.



Under the Romans the city grew in importance and became a renowned military and commercial centre. Thessalonica took its centre in the new world and rapidly outstripped its older neighbours. It was the largest city in Macedonia and is located at the junction of an important land route from Italy to the provinces. This key road, known as the Egnatian Way, is still visible today! Thessalonica was also well situated as a trading port, located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf.

Qa. From a religious perspective, what seems to be unique about Thessalonica when compared to other Macedonian cities? (Hint, where did Paul have to go to preach in Philippi)

1.5 Preaching in Thessalonica

Before we get to Thessalonica, let's just pause for a moment and remind ourselves what happened in Philippi. Paul and Silas were brutally beaten and "after they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison" (Acts 16:23 NIV). The next day they were released and they made their journey towards Thessalonica along the Egnatian way (passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia). It's a journey of 100 miles!

Just think, walking a hundred miles! What the longest distance you've walked in a day? Anyone who has participated in a walkathon or hiked for a day (covering 30 or so km's) will know by the end of the day you can barely stand. A 100 miles journey would take at least three days (for them). Now try to imagine walking 100 miles just after you've been beaten to within an inch of your life and spent a sleepless night in a prison! How long do you think we'd have lasted if Paul chose us as a missionary companion! (can we blame Mark for leaving during the first missionary journey!!). The amazing determination of Paul and his companions on these journeys is simply incredible.

After a long journey they arrive in Thessalonica and the preaching begins! No rest and relaxation on this mission, they strayed neither to the right nor left.

Qa. What is the first place Paul goes to preach?

Qb. What was the main point of Paul's message?

Qc. How did the Jews respond to Paul's preaching?

Qd. Three brethren from the Thessalonica ecclesia are referred to by name, who are they?

1. _____ (reference: _____)

2. _____ (reference: _____)

3. _____ (reference: _____)

Paul was a not only a powerful speaker, but an amazing example by the way he lived. He also had incredible insight. Paul very wisely made a decision to support himself when on missionary journeys and not rely on financial support from the local brethren and sisters. Evidently, even in wealthy Jewish families, the fathers made their sons learn a trade to prevent idleness and poverty.

Qe. What was Paul's trade?

Qf. Why did Paul support himself on his missionary journeys? (Hint, the reasons are given in both 1st and 2nd of Thessalonians)

Qg. Does the Bible say it is wrong to be paid to do missionary/preaching work?

Qh. Thinking of today, what are some of the pro's and con's of paying someone to preach or go on missionary work?

Pro's	Con's

Qi. Considering the above, what is your overall conclusion about paid preachers?

It is interesting to consider the pattern of Paul's preaching. In Thessalonica, Paul initially went into the synagogue to preach. He was not shy, he was not afraid of controversy. Paul boldly debated and reasoned from the scriptures.

Qj. List some confrontational and non-confrontational methods of preaching that we can engage in today:

Confrontational	Non-confrontational

Qk. Which method do you think works best in our society today?

In the Bezen text of Acts 19:9 (reference to preaching in Ephesus), it is indicated that Paul preached in the synagogue from the 5th to the 10th hour, that is midday till late afternoon, a period when many people would have been heading home from work. In addition to preaching in known centres of religious discussion, Paul also would go from house to house preaching to both Jews and Greeks (Acts 20:20).

In the past, a considerable amount of our preaching has depended on people coming to us (i.e. lectures).

Ql. What methods of preaching are you or your ecclesia involved in where you actually 'go to the people' and tell them the good news? Do you think these methods of preaching are more effective than having people come to us?

From the beginning of Acts 17, the preaching campaign seems to have lasted for 3 months. However, it is likely that there is a gap between verses 4 and 5 and the preaching campaign lasted several months. It was not long, in any case, before the Jews started to oppose Paul’s preaching efforts. The Jews sought out some ‘lewd fellows of the baser sort’ and sent them to the home of Jason (Acts 17:5-9).

Qm. In Acts 17: 5, what are the Greek terms and meaning for the following words?

Word(s)	Greek word	Meaning
“Lewd”		
“Baser sort”		

Qn. Based on the meanings of the words, what type of people did the Jews stir up against this new ecclesia? What would be the equivalent today?

Qo. What was the likely nationality of Jason? (Hint, look in Romans)

Qp. What were the accusations brought against Paul and those in the new ecclesia?

Qq. Do these accusations remind you of anything? If yes, what?

Qr. What is the Greek word for "rulers" in Acts 17:6?

Qs. Where else in the Bible is this exact phrase used?

Besides the above use of this term, it is nowhere to be found in Greek literature, but in 1835 was discovered engraved on an arch that spanned the Egnatian Way on the west side of Thessalonica. The term has since been found in 16 other inscriptions in surrounding Macedonian towns. The precise use of this word by Luke highlights what an observant historian he was and verifies the accuracy of his record.

Qt. Can you think of another incident when 'lewd fellows of a baser sort' surrounded the home of a faithful man?

Qu. What does Acts 17:9 mean? (look up different translations if this helps)

Barely had this ecclesia been established and persecution begins! This was a real test for these brethren and sisters. Paul warned this ecclesia of the persecution that would (not might) come. Previously, Paul told the brethren and sisters that 'we must through much tribulation enter in to the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22).

Qv. After the incident involving Jason, did persecution continued for this newly established ecclesia in Thessalonica?

Qw. Who were the main culprits inflicting the persecution? (Hint, look in 1 Thessalonians)

Qx. Do you know of any countries in the world today where brethren and sisters suffer physical persecution?

Qy. Have you ever suffered persecution for what you believe? In what form has this persecution come?

1.6 Timothy's Reports

Paul left Silas and Timothy in Berea and went to Athens, after some time Paul sends word instructing them to meet him in Athens. Timothy rejoins Paul and is then sent to Thessalonica, in the mean time, Paul moves on to Corinth. Some time later both Timothy and Silas meet up with Paul in Corinth. Timothy brings with him a report of how the brethren and sisters are doing in Thessalonica. In response, Paul writes the first letter to the Thessalonians. About 6 months later Paul sends 2 Thessalonians in response to further information there.

Qa. From reviewing first and second of Thessalonians, put together a summary of you think Timothy said about the ecclesia in Thessalonica.

For example;

- The faith of the brethren had stood the test of persecution (1 Thess 1:3, 3:6)
- Their love was seen in their labour and in their hospitality to brethren throughout all Macedonia (1 Thess 1:3, 3:6, 4:9-10)
- _____
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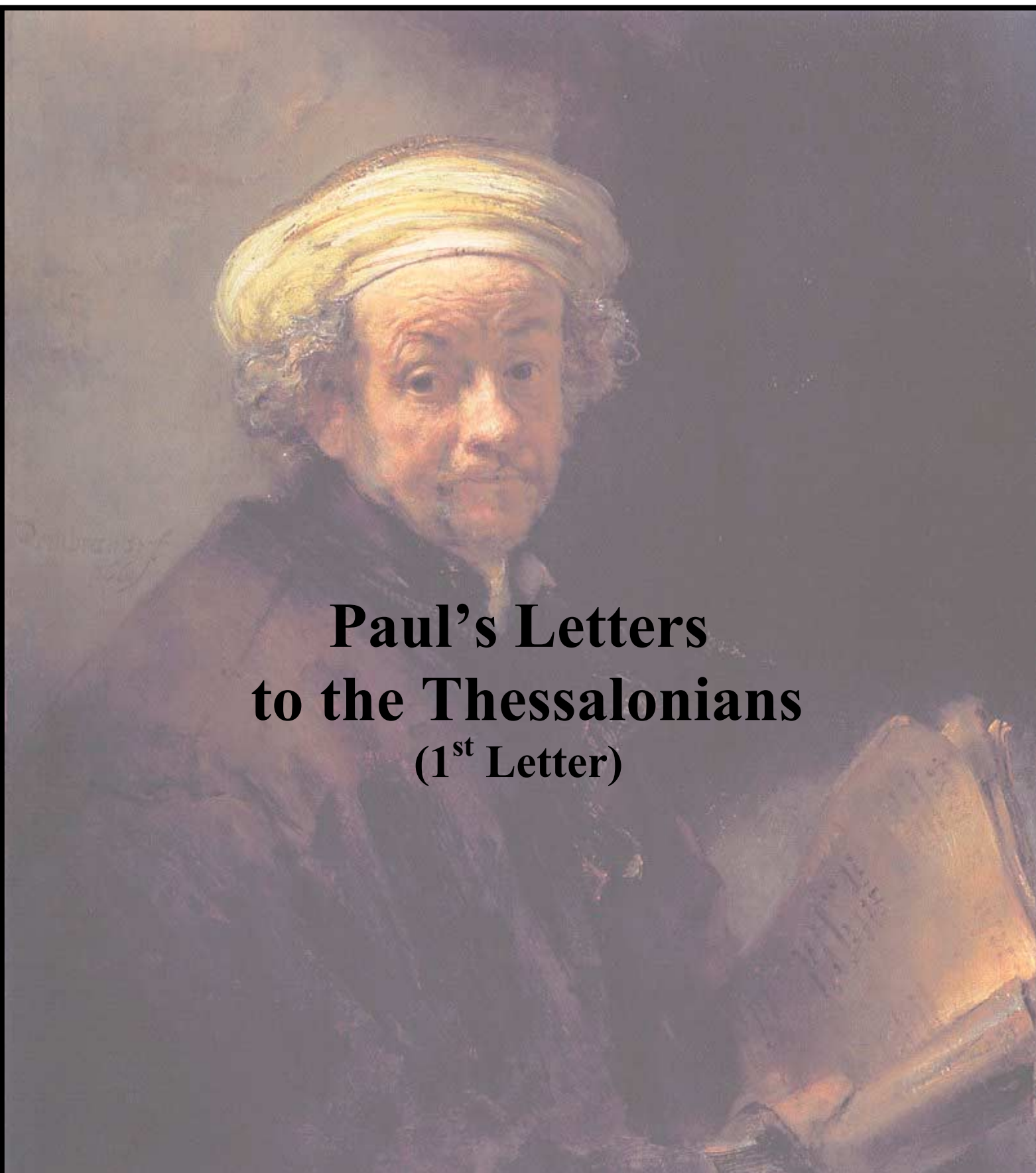
1.7 Thessalonians, key theme

Qa. What important teaching is mentioned in every chapter of both the first and second letters of Thessalonians?

Qb. List all the verses where this teaching is mentioned:

Chapter	Verse
1 Thessalonians 1	
1 Thessalonians 2	
1 Thessalonians 3	
1 Thessalonians 4	
1 Thessalonians 5	
2 Thessalonians 1	
2 Thessalonians 2	
2 Thessalonians 3	

Qc. Why do you think Paul mentions this subject so frequently?



**Paul's Letters
to the Thessalonians
(1st Letter)**

“Steadfastness while waiting for the return of Christ”

Study Notes for Manitoulin Youth Conference

2004



Rembrandt, The Apostle Paul

SECTION 2 – THE FIRST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

2.1 Theme Studies

Watch for these themes (below) through the whole study, and the year. Watch for stuff in everything you look at during the coming months before Conference. Your readings, Bible Class, CYC, study days and everything else including the rest of the workbook. Then choose one of them to build into an essay at the end of the study. Pull out a couple of pieces of paper and put them in your Bible and remember to add to it as you go. If you use this it will give you focus and purpose to your readings and everything else—can you find a point to add today?

1. ***Faith and Hope:*** *The need to have hope and faith in that hope is one of the themes in the letters to the Thessalonians. Find anything you can that relates to this theme in the books.*
2. ***Love:*** *We need to have love for one another as Christ had for us and as Paul displayed love to those he preached to. Follow this theme through the letters to the Thessalonians and anything you come across in the rest of the Bible to show how vital it is to a life in Christ.*
3. ***The Kingdom:*** *This is related to Theme 1 above, but this time focus on the concrete of what the hope of the kingdom is exactly. Fill in as many blanks as you can. It comes up in every chapter of Thessalonians so you will have plenty opportunity to relate it to the study as a whole.*
4. ***Preaching:*** *This comes up all the time. How should we preach, who should we preach to, and what should we say? Paul gives us a fantastic example of how to do this. Dig up all you can!*

Optional strategy, going a little deeper.

There are various elements and stages in Paul's preaching that we can quite easily pick out of the New Testament. Paul's preaching campaigns must be among the most effective ever, if not the most effective, but also exactly the kind of preaching God was asking for. There are many reasons for that, some of which we have no control over but the pattern is clearly laid out in scripture. Let's find out exactly what that is so that we can do some self examination and adjust our own preaching to match what God requires. Insert some paper here for writing your notes.

1. ***Let's start in 1Thessalonians. 1:5. There are clear steps given, including what seems to be a reference to immediate follow-up. Jot down in point form each element in your own words and provide a cross-reference to expand each if you can think of one.***
2. ***Many passages that talk of Paul's preaching don't give you any details, but there are plenty that do. Start with the ones given and then find a few of your own to compile a more complete list than we can get from Thessalonians alone. Look for hints about his style, approach, depth and any other interesting points. Try to build a more complete picture. Verses to start with: Acts 28:31; 2 Cor. 3:1-7; 2 Cor. 2:15; Acts 17:1-3,7,16-34.***
3. ***Does Paul hide anything from those he preaches to? Look for at least one example of the principle we find in Ezekiel 3:17-21.***
4. ***From your above lists come up with some ideas for a first century style preaching effort for today. (I.e. something that fills the requirements of scripture and would be practical for us today).***
5. ***Paul didn't just go to a corner store and talk to the guy at the desk. Do you think he would have been as effective if he hadn't caused waves?***



Suggested reading: 1 Thessalonians 1

2.2 Overview

Read through First Thessalonians and come up with some logical subject headings for it chunk by chunk and summarize the main points in your own words.

2.3 Chapter 1

1:1 ¹Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Did Paul write this Epistle alone?

2. Are there ways that we can work together in the truth to help each other as Paul and those with him worked together? Think of some ways that you could be of help to others and some things you could use help with.

3. Do you think this kind of teamwork might be part of what God had in mind in Genesis 2:18? Find at least two biblical examples of couples that worked well as a team.

As an exhortation for personal evaluation:

- 4. How is your personal choice of friends? Are your friends the kind of people that you could see yourself working with on a Bible based project?**

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- 5. Find several passages to show what God's standard is as far as friendship goes (e.g. Jam. 4:4)? What kind of friends would God want us to choose?**

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- 6. Find some examples of other friendships that worked in the Bible. Why did they work? What things seem to pull them together? Please list your passages.**

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- 7. Who is Silvanus? Hint: Paul spent a lot of time with him. Look up his name, and names of others Paul took with him on his journeys.**

1:2

²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

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- 8. Paul and those with him really cared for their brothers and sisters. What lessons can we learn from their example? Think of a place where we are told to pray for each other, or are given a more detailed example of this.**

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- 9. What is the link between verses 2 and 3?**
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1:3 ³Remembering without ceasing your work of **faith** (4102), and labour of **love** (26), and patience of **hope** (1680) in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

10. Look up each of the bolded words (above) and explain how each word relates to its partner. Notice the pattern of action first and motive second.

Faith

Love

Hope

These three things, faith, love and hope, become a theme through the book. Watch for it.

11. Try to think of two examples of each pair of words to help you to better appreciate the concepts being expressed: one example typical of Paul's time, and something in your life or that you can relate to.

Work of Faith

Labour of Love

Patience of Hope

1:4 ⁴Knowing, brethren beloved, your election (1589) of God.

12. Look up the word "election". What does it mean?

13. 2 Peter 1:10 says we can make our calling and election sure, what things does the context in 2 Peter tell us to do that will "make our calling and election sure"?

14. Find an example of a Bible character who illustrates this either positively or negatively (or both). What was it that made them pleasing or displeasing to God?

1:5 ⁵For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

15. There are several phrases used in scripture to describe preaching the truth. Read Acts 8 and Col 1:5 and find as many as you can. Use these parallels to help you understand what is meant here by the gospel coming "in word".

16. What does he mean by the gospel coming unto them in power? What power does the gospel have? (Rom 1:16) Do you think this relates to the end of verse 5 and verse 6? How?

17. What exhortation can we gain from this use of personal example? Paul's example added strength to his words.

18. How was the holy spirit used in first century preaching? The following references may help but feel free to add any you think of: Acts 14:3, Heb 2:4, 1 Cor 14:22.

1:6 ⁶And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit:

It is sometimes said "we can't all be Apostle Pauls," but here Paul says that the Thessalonians were followers of him. In several places (including 1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul tells people to follow him as he follows Christ. Christ tells us to follow him too.

19. In saying this, do you think we limit what Paul and Christ are really saying? Why?

20. Paul is confident enough about his walk to tell believers to follow him. Do you think, if we were to pay more attention to the example that we set, we could get closer to this confidence (i.e., improve our example to others, so we would be more comfortable with them following us)?

21. The Thessalonians received the word in a time of persecution. In what ways would this be a challenge, and in what ways would it have helped them? Find other verses that talk about suffering for the sake of the truth, to support your answer.

22. We do not have the holy spirit today as they did in the first century but we do have a product of the holy spirit. Use John 6:63, and any other verses you think are helpful, to show what this is.

23. Using your above answer, explain how we can have the joy of the holy spirit without possessing the holy spirit?

1:7 ⁷So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

24. The Thessalonians themselves became examples. Follow the progression of examples, starting with God, ending with all the believers.

25. How can we apply this in our lives? Do you think it is possible to preach effectively without making yourself a living example of your message? Find some verses to support your answer.

1:8-10 ⁸For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. ⁹For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; ¹⁰And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

26. How can you apply the example of the Thessalonians in your life? In other words, what things could/do you do that would be an example of works of faith?

27. What might the Thessalonians have done to show others that they were waiting for Christ's return? They didn't have an ark they were building to show others what they expected to happen (ch. 1:10).



Suggested reading: 1 Thessalonians 2

2.4 Chapter 2

2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

- 1. To be "vain" is to be empty or void of truth. What could have caused the Apostle's preaching to be in vain? What clues can you find here, or elsewhere? In what way can we apply these things to our preaching to avoid "preaching in vain"?**

2:2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

- 2. From Acts chapter 16, explain what they had gone through before arriving at Thessalonica.**

- 3. How would suffering in this way tend to affect them personally? What challenges would they have had to overcome?**

- 4. Do you think this would have any effect on the message they were preaching?**

5. What effect would it have likely had on the effectiveness of the message if they had been unfaithful in their trial? What lesson can we take from this to apply in our lives?

In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12, Paul contrasts how he might have approached them if he had been selfishly motivated, with the way he actually presented himself, as a servant, putting their needs first.

2:3 For our exhortation (3874) *was* not of deceit (4106), nor of uncleanness (167), nor in guile (1388):

6. Look up the key words:

Exhortation:

Deceit:

Uncleanness:

Guile:

7. Using these definitions, explain how it may have been tempting for the apostles, now for us, to give exhortation of deceit, uncleanness or, guile?

2:4 But as we were allowed (1381) of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

8. Look up the word "allowed".

9. Contrast the idea of this meaning, with 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10. First think on a personal level, then expand to the body of Christ generally, and then to the world at large.

10. What does God require of us in our preaching? See how many objectives you can find with supporting verses (e.g. Ezekiel 3:17).

2:5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

11. "Flattering words", "cloke of covetousness." Try alternate versions to get a better idea of what this is talking about.

12. Why and in what way could we or others be tempted to use flattering words rather than the pure gospel?

13. Flesh always has a tendency to be covetous. In what ways could this creep into the ecclesia? What can we do to actively avoid it? Find some verses that point out God's view of covetousness.

14. Find links from here to other parts of the New Testament (either prophecies about this happening later, or examples of people who did this kind of thing using these methods). Acts 5 gives us an example of someone trying to cover up their covetousness. Acts 20:27-35 contrasts the way of the wolf with the way of a true apostle. Use these verses and others you find in your answer.

2:6

Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

15. This too is a tendency of our flesh. John 5:44 shows how the Jews in Christ's time sought glory of each other Christ says that we cannot believe if we are seeking each other's glory. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 prophesies that this will happen again in the ecclesia. From these and other verses, explain what the result will be of the preacher or teacher seeking glory for himself rather than for God and his truth?

16. "When we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." Paul did not use his standing as an apostle to get money from his brethren and sisters. What lessons can we take from Paul's example?

Chapter 2:7-12 This section is a good example of how Paul, and those with him, behaved themselves in Thessalonica.

2:7-8

⁷ But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse (5162) cherisheth (302) her children: ⁸ So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

17. They were gentle among them. Not only were they gentle, but they also showed the love of Christ, risking their own lives. We too are called to follow the same self sacrificing example. Look up the meaning of the words "nurse" and "cherish". Find some cross-references that illustrate the kind of care Paul had in mind. (Numbers 11:12 is neat).

nurse

cherish

18. How would this idea apply spiritually in the "imparting of the gospel of God" as in Acts 20:27?

19. How does this relate to having a genuine love for them?

2:9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

20. Paul goes into the idea of providing for himself in this way in greater depth in 2Thessalonians 3:7-12. Read this now and note how they link together.

2:10 Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

21. Their example and their preaching matched up well. Paul lived the gospel. Find other references that expand on this idea.

2:11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children,

22. This is one of many father-child relationships in Scripture. Using this verse, and any other examples you think would be helpful, provide several lessons we can apply in our relationships with each other.

2:12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

23. The kingdom of God, and things related to the kingdom, feature largely in the apostles writing and Christ's teaching. See if you can find verses to show that:

the coming kingdom was included as part of the gospel preached

was necessary to understand before baptism

was used as a motivator

was a specific part of the gospel that directly brought persecution.

2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

24. They received the word as from God, not from men. What do you think the difference would be in how they reacted to the message seeing they received it in this way? Find another one or two verses that spell out how we are to receive and treat the word of God?

25. "...the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." The word of God is not like man's word. It is powerful. To illustrate what the word can do for us in our lives, put this verse from Thessalonians together with these two verses: Isaiah 55:10-11; Acts 20:32. Feel free to add in your own verses too!

2:14-16

¹⁴ For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

¹⁵ Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

¹⁶ Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Note: we will look at these verses further later in the study.

26. These verses show us that we are just coming up to the time when Jerusalem was taken in AD 70. Find other verses to expand this snippet of information about God's judgement of the Jews.

27. What is to happen to them in the end at Christ's return? Hint, Romans has plenty in it to get you going.

2:17-18 ¹⁷ But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.
¹⁸ Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan (4567) hindered us.

28. Look up and see where the word "Satan" is used elsewhere and give some examples of other people who are called a "satan". The word appears to be a transliteration straight from Hebrew into Greek and the English, but sometimes a real English translation is given in the King James (and some other translations as well). In your own words, sum up what the word means from its uses and contexts.

Who was the satan in Acts 16:22,39?

Who was the satan in Acts 17:13?

Who do you think the satan might have been in 1 Thessalonians 2:18?

2:19-20 ¹⁹ For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
²⁰ For ye are our glory and joy.

29. Paul shows a great feeling of emotion toward these brethren and sisters. We have just been looking at the suffering he went through to bring the truth to them. Do you think this experience would affect the way he felt toward them? Read 1 John 3:16; 1Thessalonians 4:9 and build a lesson for us by putting the passages together.



Suggested reading: 1 Thessalonians 3

2.5 Chapter 3

3:1-5

¹Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; ²And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: ³That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. ⁴For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. ⁵For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

1. ***There was an urgency about the work in Macedonia. Have a look at Acts 16:9-10. and explain what was special about the work in the area and how it would add to the emotional attachment to people here.***
-

2. ***When Paul couldn't go and see them himself, as we saw in the last chapter, he didn't stop there but because he cared about their spiritual welfare, sent Timothy. This in a way, seems to be a similar attitude to David's in 1 Chronicles 22:5. What can we learn from the examples of these men in our work for God?***
-

3:6-8

⁶But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: ⁷Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: ⁸For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.
⁹ For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
¹⁰ Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and

might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

- 3. Try to follow Paul and Timothy's movements using these verses; the context of 1 Thessalonians 3:1, the story in Acts, especially Acts 17:1,10,15;18:1,5,6.a) Where did they go?**
-
-

- 4. What frame of mind do you think Paul might have been in by the time he got the refreshing news back? Can we take a lesson from this about how we should encourage each other? Usually we aren't all in need at the same time.**
-
-

3:9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Thankfulness to God is very important for us to feel and express. We will look more closely at this later in the study.

- 5. Joy. Joy already came up in the last chapter. Why do you think the believers would cause such great joy for the Apostles? See if you can find other verses that may help. 3 John 4 may be a good start.**
-
-

3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

- 6. Even though Timothy had been sent to help them, Paul still wants to go himself. Paul and those with him give us a strong example of fervent prayer. What does this say about the kind of care he had for them? What reason does Paul give for wanting to see them?**
-
-

- 7. Look at Acts 19:21,22 and 20:3. How were their prayers answered?**
-

3:11

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

8. In the King James the first part of this verse sounds like three people. Take a look at some other translations to clear this up. Suggest a clearer way this could be translated.

9. The phrase "direct our way unto you", is a continuation of thought from Ch. 2:18 and 3:10. What is the connecting thought?

3:12

And the Lord make you to increase (4121) and abound (4052) in love (26) one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

A theme starts here that extends half way into the next chapter. Love, and how love affects conduct.

10. Paul says they have love already in Ch. 3:6 and 1:3. Here Paul is exhorting them to increase and abound in love. Look up love (see Ch. 1, Question 10), increase and abound, then come up with a lesson for us in our love as we try to follow Paul as the Thessalonians were encouraged to do.

increase

abound

Lesson:

3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable (273) in holiness (42) before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

11. Look up "unblameable" and "holiness". Note the relationship between love (v11) and holiness.

unblameable

holiness



Suggested reading: 1 Thessalonians 4

2.6 Chapter 4

4:1-2 ¹Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more. ²For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

- 1. Find the link between keeping the commandments and having love. Hint, there are several verses in John's Gospel and John's letters.**
-
-

4:3-8 ³For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification (38), that ye should abstain from fornication (4202): ⁴That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification (38) and honour; ⁵Not in the lust (3806) of concupiscence (1939), even as the Gentiles which know not God: ⁶That no *man* go beyond and defraud (4122) his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. ⁷For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. ⁸He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

Fornication or Love?

- 2. Let's look up some key words to get a clear picture of what is being said.**

(v.3) sanctification:

(v.3) fornication:

(v.5) lust of concupiscence:

(v.6) defraud:

Note the context of “defraud”. Plug the meaning in and put the lesson in your own words.

3. How would having love of God and love of neighbour keep you from fornication (or cause you to be holy)?

4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

“Taught of God”—The word is *theodidaktos* #2312 and means God-taught. It is the only place that the same word is used although a root of it is used in John 6:45. Isaiah 54:13 has the same idea. Bro. John Carter, commenting on this, said that “we are all pupils in the school of God.”

4. Look at the context of each verse where this word or its root occurs and note how well each fits in.

5. Do you think Paul may have had Isaiah in mind when he wrote this? In what ways does God teach us?

4:11-12 ¹¹And that ye study (5389) to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; ¹²That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and *that* ye may have lack of nothing.

6. Look up "study". What is the idea behind this Greek word?

7. How does this definition strengthen the meaning of the verse?

Please slow down and pay extra attention to the last part of this chapter, as some of it is hard to get a good firm understanding of!

4:13-18
(YLT)

¹³And I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that ye may not sorrow, as also the rest who have not hope, ¹⁴for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God those asleep through Jesus he will bring with him, ¹⁵for this to you we say in the word of the Lord, that we who are living—who do remain over to the presence of the Lord—may not precede those asleep, ¹⁶because the Lord himself, in a shout, in the voice of a chief-messenger, and in the trump of God, shall come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first, ¹⁷then we who are living, who are remaining over, together with them shall be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in air, and so always with the Lord we shall be; ¹⁸so, then, comfort ye one another in these words.

The next section has been quoted (above) from Young's Literal translation. It is faithful to the original in some key areas in these verses including the use of definite articles. Use this for reference during the next few questions.

4:13-14

¹³But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so (3779) them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

8. Remembering the situation that the Thessalonians were in, what do verses 13-14 imply that the believers have been through?

9. Look up the meaning of "even so" in Strongs:

10. What basic principle does this provide that may help us to understand what the raising of the dead will be like?

11. The subject of the last verses of chapter 4 is given to us in verse 14. What is it?

Note the link between verses 14 and 16: “in Jesus” and “in Christ”. Note also the timing given in verse 16. Christ returns from heaven and then the next thing that happens is that the dead are raised. “The dead in Christ rise first.” 2Thessalonians 2:1 has the same order of events. 1Corinthians 15:23 has the same sort of message. So those IN CHRIST will be with him by means of a resurrection after his return to earth.

12. Our resurrection is after the pattern of Jesus’ (See 1Cor. 15:20-23). How were the angels used in the resurrection of Jesus?

4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (5348) them which are asleep.

13. What does the word "prevent" mean? Use other translations (if using the KJV) and look up the word in a concordance.

Neat cross ref. Heb 11:40—“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

4:16-17 ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout (2752), with the voice of the archangel (743), and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up (726) together with them in the clouds (3507), to meet (529) the Lord in the air (109): and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

14. To help us understand better the intended meaning of these verses, look up these words:

caught up

the clouds

the air

meet (Look up the other places “meet” is used to help you find a Biblical definition.)

Compare the differences between your own translation and Young’s Literal Translation given earlier. Try to the best of your ability, with the tools available to you, to choose the translation most faithful to the original.

15. Does anyone come with Christ from heaven?

16. Who does Acts 1:11 say went with him when he left and how many people saw it? What does it say about how he is to return?

17. Use a study aid to expand the meaning of “shout”. Is it just a random yelling, or does the Greek tell something specific about this shout?

18. Look up archangel and angel in Strongs. Once you know what these words mean, read 1 Peter 3:22. Who is the “Archangel”?

archangel

angel (32)

19. From the context here in v. 16, what do you think he might be commanding the angels to do?

20. Whose voice does John 5:26-29 say the dead will hear?

21. In 1 Cor. 15:52 a trumpet is also mentioned. What other thing is similar about these passages?

22. Under the law of Moses a trumpet was used for certain things (see Num. 10, Ex. 19:16-20 etc.). Why is it fitting to use this language in this context?

23. The same Greek word (#726) is used in Acts 8:39 to describe the relocation of Philip as is used in verse 17 to describe the relocation of the saints. Why do you think the translators might have used different English in each case? What should this teach us about how much to trust the translators?

24. The living are taken together with those who have been raised. Although it isn't mentioned in 1Thess. 4, what happens when we are gathered and meet the Lord? (What is the next event?) See Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-30; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:26; 2 Tim. 4:1.

25. A cloud is used as a metaphor in scripture. What is it a metaphor of? Do you think this would fit in this context? (Heb. 12:1; Eze. 38:9; Jer. 4:13).

For anyone who wants to go further with this idea, there is a tangent link to Psa. 104:1-3 and 1 Chr. 28:18—it connects up with the Cherubim.

26. There is far more in the symbol of a cloud than simply a group of people. Other things that are associated with natural clouds also have a spiritual meaning. Clouds bring rain which waters the earth. What is the spiritual application especially related to the Kingdom Age? (See Isa. 55:8-11; 1 Cor. 3:6-8; Jer. 3:3,15; Deut. 32:2).

27. Clouds also bring storms and lightning. In what way would this fit the context of the kingdom? (Isa. 28:17; Psa. 97:1-4).

28. What is there that can appear in a cloud that is associated with God's covenant? (Gen. 9:13-16; Eze. 1:28).

29. Why would Paul through the spirit use a symbol like clouds rather than something simpler?

30. We are gathered to him. Add any details to this that you can from these verses: 1 John 3:2; John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 2:1; Job 19:25-27; Psa. 50:5-6; and Matt. 13:41,49.

Air is used as a metaphor just like clouds. Some Evangelical Christians believe that this means we fly off to heaven for seven years. We know from other scriptures that we have work to do with Christ here on earth. (See Jer. 3:15; Zech. 14:4-5; Rev. 5:10; Psa. 149:4-9, Dan. 7:18; Matt. 5:5 etc.). Also, Rev. 22:12 says that Christ COMES to reward us. So what DOES this verse mean? Let's carry on and see what else we can learn.

31. Examine Gen. 1:16-18 to answer the following:

Where does it say the “lights” are put?

What does “firmament” mean?

What are we told the “lights” are for?

32. Continuing this thread from Genesis, what does Psa. 136:7-9 add to this?

33. What is the link between Dan. 12:2-3, Math. 13:43 and Gen. 15:5?

34. How do Isa. 65:17-18, Isa. 1:2,10 and Deut. 31:30-32:1 compliment what we have just looked at? (Who is he addressing as “heavens”?).

35. Having understood this concept, how can we explain in what way we will be “in heaven” during the kingdom even though we will literally be on earth?

36. Note that there is also to be a new earth. Will there be nations to be ruled over? How can this be? (Zech. 2:11; Psa. 86:9; Gen. 22:17; Zech. 14:16-19).

37. Where will we “ever be with the Lord”? Use verses from the beginning of this question or your own.

A good key verse to get into the nitty gritty of the “air” is Eph. 2:2. Without getting too involved, note that the “air” is related to the power of the prince (i.e., the rulers of the world). It is “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” In Paul’s day this was the pagan environment (atmosphere) that prevailed. Today’s world is one in which a spirit of humanism is created by world rulers—but it is still the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. When Christ comes to rule the world, the “air” (or social environment) will be changed (c/p Rev. 16:17). See 2Peter 3:13.

As a summary, we know that there won’t be a rapture to heaven of the saints because:

- Jesus descends *himself* to earth before we are raised and gathered to him.
- The Angels raise the dead after the pattern of Jesus’ resurrection.
- Jesus returns so that where he is his disciples may be also.
- The dead and living have to be judged at his appearing.
- Clouds, air and heaven are symbols related to ruling powers.



Suggested reading: 1 Thessalonians 5

2.7 Chapter 5

5:1

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1. *These brethren knew their times and seasons. Matthew 16:1-4 is an excellent cross-reference. We need to have faith in the signs given, but there are many more that exhort us to know the signs that God has put in the world around us. Find some additional verses and make an exhortational point out of them.*
-
-
-

The thief like coming.

5:2-3

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

2. *Who do these verses say the coming of the Lord, like a thief in the night, will be to? What happens to the people that he comes to as a thief?*
-
-
-

5:4-5 ⁴ But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

3. Who does Christ not come as a thief to? Why is there a difference? What factors change whether or not Christ's coming is as a thief to you (c/p Rev. 3:3)?

5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

4. The difference between the two camps is highlighted. What exhortation is given in this verse to cause us to be ready?

5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

5. Follow the allusions used in this verse. What scriptural connotations are associated with these ideas (i.e. sleep, night and drunken)?

5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

6. There is an excellent link from the breastplate reference here, to the high priest in Exodus 28 starting at verse 15. Note what metal the priest's breastplate is made of. What does this metal represent in scripture? Find a verse to show this.

7. Now look at verse 29. How does it describe where Aaron wore the breastplate? What might this symbolize?

8. Back in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, note what characteristics are associated with the breastplate here.

9. A breastplate protects the vital organs. Find verses to show how these spiritual characteristics, that are connected with the breastplate, are necessary to save us?

Also, interestingly enough, the priesthood is described in Num. 4:23 and other places, using the same Hebrew word as is used for a “host” or “army” elsewhere. This includes the Levitical priesthood in the warrior metaphor used in Eph. 6 and 1 Thess. 5.

10. A helmet protects the head. It can save us from a life threatening blow. Find other verses that link salvation with hope.

5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

11. This verse seems to carry on the same thought from verse 8. It's an encouragement for the brethren and sisters to carry on in faith because God's plan is to save not destroy. Find a verse, elsewhere in scripture, that reinforces the idea expressed here.

5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

12. There are several excellent cross-references to this verse including at least two in Hebrews. Choose one and explain why you chose it.

5:11 Wherefore comfort (3870) yourselves together, and edify (3618) one another, even as also ye do.

13. Look up the definitions of "comfort" and "edify".

comfort

edify

14. The context of the verse is watching and waiting for the Lord. This is a strong exhortation for us as how to find "comfort" and "edification". Luke 12:36 is a good cross-reference. What are some ways we can do this in practice for each other. Find a verse or two to support your answer.

15. Verses 11 to 15 cover some things about how we should behave toward each other in the ecclesia. There are plenty of verses that are relevant to this, but what is the main overriding principle that we always need to keep in mind? Matt. 22:36-40 (note the two areas) and John 13:35 may help.

5:12-13 ¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish (3560) you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

16. Look up "admonish". What does it mean?

17. Is the response we are told to have here the natural response we have to being "admonished"? How will love help us do the right thing, and what poor response will it prevent us from having?

18. "Be at peace among yourselves." This is a very nice concept, but sometimes proves hard to do. Being at peace, a peace maker or related things, come up numerous times in the Bible. Find one that you think gives practical help, or an example for us, as we try to do this.

5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly (813), comfort (3888) the feebleminded (3642), support the weak (772), be patient (3114) toward all *men*.

19. There are several words here that would probably be helpful to look up to understand this better. Look them up and comment on how the meaning of the word affects the verse.

unruly

comfort

feebleminded

support

weak

patient

5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*.

20. "See that none render evil for evil". This is the tempting thing for us to do, be evil in return for evil. Come up with some scriptural and some practice examples of this, from your own life or elsewhere, either positive or negative. (I.e. it's a good thing to do because this is what happens when you don't. Or, yes it's good because this is how well it works.)

21. "Ever follow that which is good" is set up as a contrast to evil for evil. How should we treat those who are evil to us? Find a cross-reference that has a similar message. Should there be any time when we have a valid reason for doing anything other than good to anyone?

5:16 Rejoice evermore.

22. Find some verses that spell out specific things we are to rejoice in.

5:17 Pray without ceasing.

23. Find some verses and examples that expand on when and how we should pray.

5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

24. Why do you think this would be such an important thing for us? See if you can find a verse that helps.

5:19 Quench (4570) not the Spirit (4151).

The expression "the spirit" is used in a number of ways in the Bible. One of them fits especially well here and seems most likely the intended meaning. It doesn't seem to make much sense to say that we could quench the spirit of God. "Spirit" is also used in the Bible similar to the way we would say "Fred is high spirited" or "Emily has a kind spirit".

25. The following verses use the same Greek word for "spirit". Follow these verses through to get a feel for how it can be used in this way: Matt. 5:3; Matt. 26:41; Luke 1:47; Rom. 11:8; 1Cor. 4:21; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 1:7. Have a look in a concordance or Bible program and see if you can add two more that seem to have the same meaning from the context. There are plenty.

Optional: find examples using an equivalent Hebrew word from the Old Testament.

26. Look up the word "quench". What does it mean?

27. In what way could we be guilty of "quenching" someone's "spirit"?

5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

There are numerous verses that stress the importance of Biblical prophecy. Remember that it is by faith in things not seen, but hoped for, that we are saved (Hebrews 11). The Bible has a wide range of Prophecies from the simple and obvious to the highly symbolic and sometimes more difficult to understand.

28. Find at least three verses that tell us that prophecy is important, or that exhort us to take notice of prophecy. (Remember that prophecy is referred to by several things including vision, or dream. It may say something like "I was in spirit" for example. You might find it easier to do the next question at the same time.)

29. Now find some verses that warn of consequences for not paying attention to prophecy.

5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

30. This verse is echoed in 2 Thess. 2:10—"they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." If we read on in 2 Thess. 2, we see that this leads them to believing error. The churches around us are endeavouring to reduce emphasis on truth for the sake of unity. The end result of this is that many are getting close to unity with Rome (known as ecumenism). We will see, when we consider 2nd Thessalonians, that there is a theme of a falling away from the truth in the New Testament. Do you see any reason why we should be exempt? Find some verses to show how we can safeguard ourselves.

5:22 Abstain from all appearance (1491) of evil.

31. Look up "appearance". This word has a wider meaning than the KJV picks up. What is it?

32. Look through at least one, preferably more, of the lists of evil things that we are to have nothing to do with (e.g. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 13). Pick out at least two things that hit home, or seem to be a problem for us as young people today. Try to think of verses and practical applications for each that will help us to overcome these things in our lives.

5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify (37) you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

33. Look up the meaning of "sanctify".

34. How does "sanctify" relate to the previous verses, especially verse 22?

35. Find a verse that talks about how God "sanctifies" us, or what he uses to sanctify us. Do not restrict your search to verses which use the same Greek word.

36. Compare other translations. Some say "at the coming..." not "unto the coming..." If we take this translation, how does it change the sense of the verse and how it relates to the context?

5:24 Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

37. We need to trust in God to act in our lives in the way we have seen. Find verses to expand on this idea.

5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

38. Do you think this tells us anything about Paul and those with him, that he would desire this from the Thessalonians?

5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss (5370).

39. Look up the word "kiss" and note the root word. How does this holy kiss relate to our sanctification in verse 23?

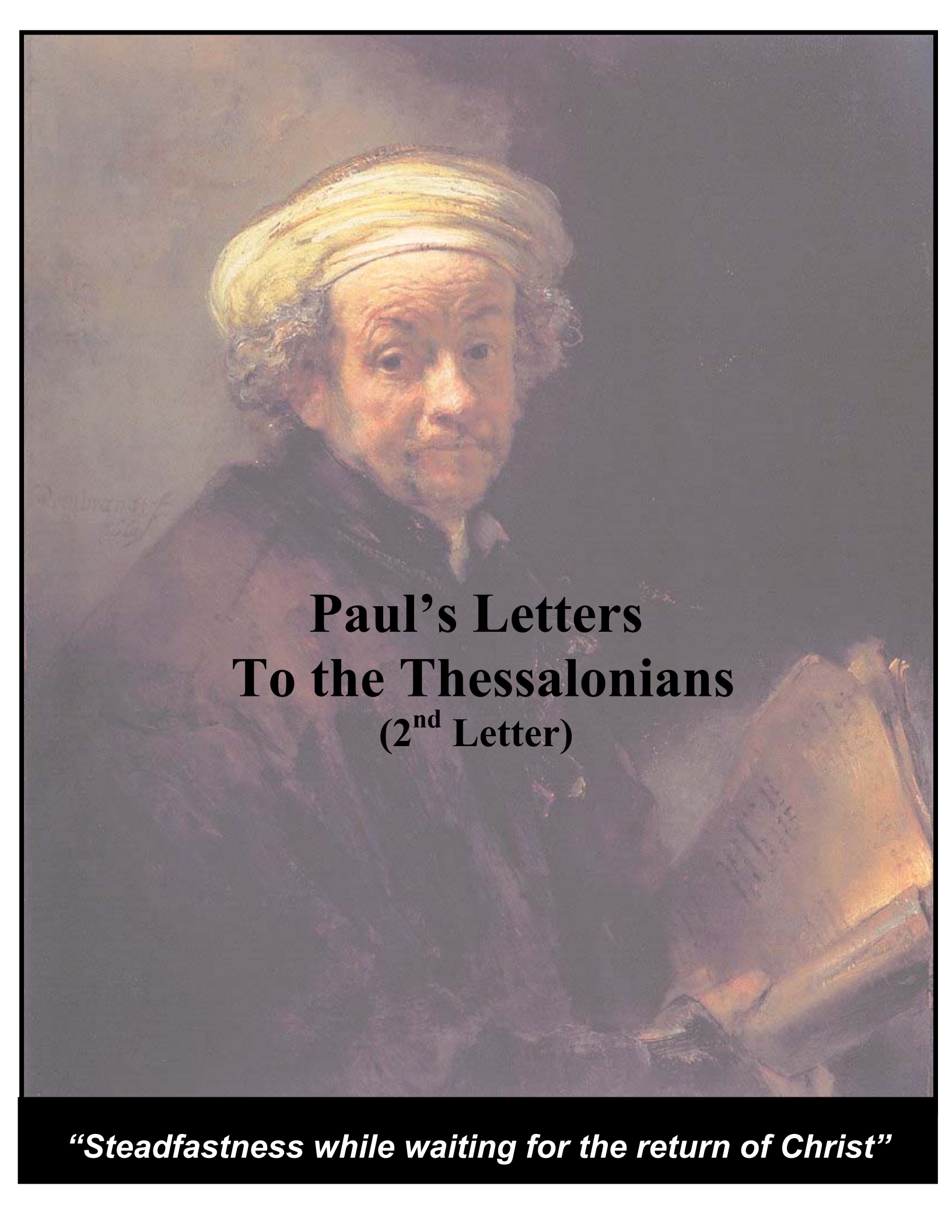
kiss

root word

5:27-28 ²⁷ I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.
²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

40. This epistle was for all the Brethren (v.27). Some people like to leave all the study to their priest. This verse suggests that isn't what is intended. Find another verse to back this up.

41. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comes up here as a passing comment (v.28). Look at Eph. 2:4-10, and list the reasons given why we need grace.



**Paul's Letters
To the Thessalonians
(2nd Letter)**

“Steadfastness while waiting for the return of Christ”

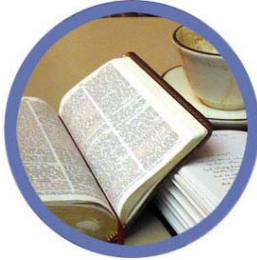
Study Notes for Manitoulin Youth Conference

2004



Rembrandt, The Apostle Paul

SECTION 3 – THE SECOND LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS



Suggested reading: 2 Thessalonians 1

3.1 Introduction

Ecclesial circumstances in the Thessalonian ecclesia called for the writing of a second letter, which is thought to have followed the first after a relatively short interval. This is the only instance that we know of, with the exception of the Corinthian ecclesia, where Paul has directed two successive letters to the same ecclesia.

This second letter focuses extensively on the events surrounding the coming of the Lord, with over one third of the book being devoted to this subject. Paul writes this second letter to:

1. *Encourage the persecuted believers,*
2. *Exhort the brethren and sisters to be steadfast and work for their living, and*
3. *Correct a misunderstanding regarding the second coming of Christ.*

In the second chapter of the second letter we are introduced to the ‘man of sin’. We are given further details on the infamous falling away from the truth, an event preceding the coming of the Lord.

3.2 Chapter 1

1. **Summarise the key messages of chapter one into a few key bullet points;**

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○

○

○

○

1:1-2 ¹Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: ²Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Why do you think Paul refers to the ecclesia being "in" God and Jesus Christ, rather than being "of" God and Jesus Christ? (Gal. 3:27-29 might help)

Paul uses the same expression when referring to the brethren 'in' Christ at Colosse (Col 1:1), it is this expression we derive the name "Christadelphians". Those who are baptized are brethren or sisters 'in' Christ.

3. Are we also brethren and sisters 'in' God? Hint: Gal. 3:27-29.

1:3 ³We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4. What two characteristics of the Thessalonian ecclesia did Paul praise?

5. Look up the Greek words and meanings for the following:

	Greek Word	Meaning
"groweth exceedingly" #5232		
"aboundeth" #4121		

6. Where in 1st Thessalonians is one of these words used? Note how this prayer is fulfilled by the second letter.

7. What is the exhortation of Paul to the Thessalonians in chapter 5:8 of the first letter?

8. Had the Thessalonians fully responded to this exhortation of Paul? Explain your answer.

9. 2 Pet. 1:8 also uses the Greek word for "abound". What additional things are mentioned here that we need to abound in?

10. Growth is emphasised by the words and verses we have just been looking at, as well as others, including these verses from Peter: 1Pet. 2:2; 2Pet. 3:18. Why do you think the scripture emphasises this and how can we cause growth in ourselves?

1:4 ⁴So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

Paul had been telling other believers of the tremendous example of these brethren and sisters. During persecution they had shown great patience and faith. We do the same today, relaying stories of brethren and sisters or entire ecclesias that have shown great faith amidst difficult times. As an example, the ecclesia in the village of Ramalakota, India experienced some of the ‘persecutors’ of the brethren and sisters eventually convert to the truth! Can you think of an example from your own experiences, preaching at work, school or in the mission field?

11. Look up the following words and give their meanings

	Greek Word	Meaning
Patience #5281		
Persecutions #1375		
Tribulations #2347		

12. Several translations use "endurance" rather than "patience". Where in scripture does Paul use this word 'patience' in relation to a race?

Paul uses this same word in Romans 5:3-4 to demonstrate how tribulation leads to this type of 'patience'.

13. Using the meaning of the words indicated above, explain how it is that persecution and tribulation leads to patience?

1:5

⁵*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:*

Their patience and faith in persecution was a testament to the power God provides and the strength He gives to endure hardships. We are reminded that the trying of our faith worketh patience (steadfast perseverance), a necessary quality for the race towards the kingdom.

The gospel of 'health and wealth', as taught by some churches today, would have us believe that if we accept Jesus we will be spared from physical suffering and be blessed with material possessions. The Bible offers no such message. God does not provide immunity to suffering or tragedy. Many of the faithful suffered because of their beliefs:

“...others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were

tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11: 36-38).

14. The gospel of 'health and wealth', as taught by some churches today, would have us believe that if we accept Jesus we will be spared from physical suffering and be blessed with material possessions. Is this idea a scriptural one? Heb. 11:36-38, 12:4-11 and Rev. 3:19 might be helpful.

15. In light of the last question, if someone were to ask you why a God of love allows bad things to happen to good people, what would your answer be?

16. In the cases of Job and Habakkuk, what was it that allowed them to come through the trials they faced? (References: Job 19:25-26, Hab. 3:17-19).

1:6 ⁶Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

The beautiful irony! Those intent on bringing tribulation on the faithful believers not only see the faith of the believers increase and their love for each other abound, but they suffer the miserable fruits of their labour for which there is no comfort.

17. What is the meaning of the word translated "trouble" (2346) and what is the meaning of the root word to which it is related? (Root of 5147).

18. From the meaning of these words, what can you deduce about how Paul viewed the troubles from the world around?

19. When does God recompense those who trouble the faithful? Explain your answer and provide quotations where possible.

1:7-8

⁷And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

20. Do you think the 'flaming fire' is literal, symbolic or both? Explain your answer. Here are some verses that you might find helpful: Lam. 2:3; Psa. 21:9; Heb. 10:27; Psa. 11:6; Eze. 38:22 and Luke 17:29. There are many more, so feel free to include others!

21. Optional: Consider the following (non-Christadelphian) commentary on these verses:

“At that time the Lord Jesus Christ will punish two classes of people: those who are ignorant of God (Rom. 1:18-32), and those who do not obey

the gospel (cf. John 3:36). The guilt of those in the latter group is the greater because their privilege is greater. God's judgment is perfectly just. Wilful rejection of God's revelation spurns God"

Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., The Bible Knowledge Commentary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Having read this quote and the verses, state what is wrong with the claim of this commentator. Explain your answer using at least three quotations to prove yourself.

22. What three groups, referred to in 1 Peter 4:17-18, will appear at the judgement?

1.

2.

3.

23. Look up the word for 'ungodly' and find out where else Peter uses it in his letter?

24. Who is this 'ungodly' class of people referring to?

25. Are these verses (2 Thes. 1:7-8) referring to judgement when Christ returns or judgement experienced during a person's lifetime?

26. If you think it is referring to judgement when Christ returns, will both the 'ungodly' and 'sinner' classes be raised for judgement? Explain your answer.

1:9 - 10 ⁹Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ¹⁰When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

27. What is the punishment of those rejected at the judgement?

28. Note the importance of belief. Find a cross-reference that brings this out a little more.

1:11-12 ¹¹Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power: ¹²That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When was the last time you prayed that someone else might be found worthy?! Paul sets a very positive example of what we can include in our prayers.



Suggested reading: 2 Thessalonians 2

3.3 Chapter 2

In the second chapter, Paul reassures them in their waiting for the return of Christ, but also takes the opportunity to warn them of what must happen first. We previously noted that in the first chapter Paul praised the Thessalonian brethren and sisters for their remarkable *love* and *faith*. Now Paul turns his writing to resolve any confusion regarding their *hope*.

2:1-2 ¹Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ²That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

- 1. The Greek word "parousia" translated "coming" is interpreted by the Jehovah's Witnesses to mean an invisible presence. Can you show from the use of this word in scripture (including 1 Thes. 4:13) that such an interpretation is not supported?**

- 2. Write out the meanings of the Greek words translated "shaken" (4531) and "troubled" (2360).**

3. This same word 'shaken' also appears in Luke 6:48. What did the wise man do to ensure his house wouldn't be shaken? What is the present day spiritual application?

As an interesting aside, the imagery of a heart being moved, as the movement of trees in the wind, is brought out in Isaiah 7:2.

The false teachings, which had such an enormous potential to shake and trouble the minds of the brethren and sisters in Thessalonica, come by "spirit", "word" and "letter".

4. What would Paul have meant by the following expressions, and how could similar influences to those the Thessalonians encountered affect us today?

(a) "spirit" (1 John 4:1 might be helpful)

(b) "word" (Acts 15:24 is interesting)

(c) "letter as from us"

The misunderstanding in regards to the coming of the Lord may have been due to a misinterpretation of the first letter, hence the reference to a 'letter as from us'. However, it seems more likely that there were actually counterfeit letters, supposedly written by Paul, circulating amongst the ecclesias.

5. What steps has Paul taken to reduce the risk of false reports or letters being distributed to the brethren and sisters? (2 Thes. 3:17).

6. How do other Bible translations render the phrase "the day of the Lord is at hand"?

7. What does the Greek word translated "at hand" (1764) mean?

As highlighted by other translations, two meanings are presented. The RSV and KJV can be used to highlight the two meanings:

“...we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come...” (RSV)

“...we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” (KJV)

Vine’s states that the KJV is incorrect and that it should be rendered “is *now* present”.

8. Can you find anywhere in Paul's letters where he refers to the Lord being at hand?

9. Why do you think it was important for them to realize that the return of Christ would not occur until certain events had come to pass?

Paul, in the first chapter of this letter points out that Christ's second coming will be a momentous day that will not go unrecognised. Christ will appear in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who are wicked, he will be glorified in his saints, there will be no doubting whether he has come or not!

Paul, in the second chapter of this letter, builds on this foundation by detailing events for the believers to expect before Christ's return will take place.

2:3 ³Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

10. What is the meaning of the Greek word translated 'deceive' (1818)?

11. 1 Tim. 2:14 uses this same word. What event is being referred to in this case?

12. What does this tell you about human nature and the process of the 'falling away'?

13. Should we be surprised that there was a falling away from the truth?

14. What English word has been derived from the word translated 'falling away' (646)?

15. What is the obvious caution for us out of all this?

16. The ASV and many other translations refer to "the" falling away rather than "a" falling away. Do you think that there is any significance in this difference and why?

17. Find as many references as you can in the Old and New Testaments that talk about a falling away from the truth. In each instance, summarize the quotation in a few bullet points and whenever possible identify the main reason why the falling away took place (i.e., who or what was primarily responsible for the falling away). You may want to use other translations to help you summarise the verse in simple point form.

Reference	Summary	Why did it occur

Reference	Summary	Why did it occur

18. Approximately when did the falling away from the truth begin? (2 John 1:7).

19. Do you think the process of the 'falling away' had finished, or is it still ongoing?

It is interesting to note that in 1 Corinthians 11:3, the word ‘simplicity’ can mean ‘not self seeking’ or ‘selflessness’.

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity (selflessness) that is in Christ” 1Cor. 11:3.

Therefore, one of the identifiers of an apostate teaching can be that it is selfish in nature.

20. Identify some true teachings or practices that have been corrupted because of 'self interest' (i.e., false teaching/practice that cater for the flesh).

False teachings or practices that are more attractive to our nature than the truth.
<i>Example: Heaven going – provides an immediate reward, helps console those who are mourning, comforting for children etc.</i>

In the midst of the ‘falling away’ emerges a perfect ambassador for this false way. He is titled ‘the man of sin, the son of perdition’.

21. What does the word 'perdition' (684) mean?

22. Who else in scripture is called the son of perdition?

23. Why was he referred to as the son of perdition?

2:4 ⁴Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Paul describes for us the character of this man of sin – (a) he opposeth, (b) he exalts himself and (c) sitteth as God in the temple of God as though he is God.

24. Look up the meanings of the root words from which the Greek word "opposeth" (480) is derived.

○

○

25. Based on the context of this verse and the meaning of the word, who or what do you think the 'man of sin' opposeth?

26. What other key historical characters referred to in the Old and New Testaments were worshipped (or desired to be worshipped) as gods?

1.

2.

3.

27. What did God do to these individuals?

1.

2.

3.

2:5-7

⁵Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

⁶And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

⁷For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

Paul had previously warned the Thessalonians about the great falling away and the rise of the man of sin.

The following versions are helpful.

“Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.” RSV (Easier reading).

“Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, these things I said to you? and now, what is keeping down ye have known, for his being revealed in his own time, for the secret of the lawlessness doth already work, only he who is keeping down now [will hinder] --till he may be out of the way,” YLT (Accurate representation of the Greek).

In section 3.5, a more detailed examination of the man of sin will be done. Without knowing who or what exactly the man of sin is, we do know that the momentum of ‘falling away’ had begun when Paul was writing this letter, but the ‘man of sin’ had yet to emerge. It was only a matter of time before the man of sin would emerge; however, there was something or someone holding back his emergence.

30. What power was there in the first century that had the ability to hold back a Christian apostasy from exalting itself? Hint: whose power might be threatened by this behaviour?

31. What does the Greek word translated ‘iniquity’ (458) mean?

32. In what way was the mystery of iniquity already at work?

2:8 ⁸And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

The word ‘wicked’ is closely related to the word ‘iniquity’ and means the condition without law, either because of ignorance or willing violation of it.

33. When will this lawless one be destroyed?

34. What do you think destroying with the breath/spirit of his mouth might refer to? Isa. 11:4 and Psa. 33:6,9 might help.

35. How does the Lord respond to attempts to usurp his authority? Eze. 28:9 and Psa. 2 are two examples.

2:9-10 ⁹Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

“[him], whose presence is according to the working of the Adversary, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders,” YLT

We have some more characteristics to help us identify the man of sin.

36. What does “after the working of Satan” mean? These passages may give you some ideas: Mark 4:15; Acts 5:3; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thes. 2:18; Rev 2:13.

It is interesting to look at the meaning of the word *dunamis*, translated ‘power’. Of particular interest are definitions 1d to f (Online Bible):

- 1) strength power, ability
 - 1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth
 - 1b) power for performing miracles
 - 1c) moral power and excellence of soul
 - 1d) the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth
 - 1e) power and resources arising from numbers
 - 1f) power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, hosts

37. Who else warned the believers of false teachers coming with signs and wonders? (Provide reference(s)).

38. There have been false teachers that have been able to perform unusual signs all down history. How does God expect us to react to them? (Ex. 7:11; Isa. 8:19).

39. What are the tests God has given to tell falsehood from truth given by him? (Deut. 13; Isa. 8:20).

40. How best can we apply these tests today?

It is useful to go to another translation for help understanding what is being said in verse 10:

“and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” RSV

Those who love not the truth will perish! This is a powerful verse to show someone that it does matter what you believe.

41. What does the word perish (622) mean?

42. Loving truth is not a popular option in our tolerant world today. Can you think of any verses you could add to this one that point out the importance God places on truth?

2:11-12 ¹¹And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ¹²That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

There seems to be an apparent contradiction here. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read that God is willing that none should perish, yet here we have God sending a strong delusion so people might believe a lie and be ‘damned’.

Before you attempt to explain this apparent contradiction, it may be useful to look up the meaning of a few words.

English Word	Greek Word	Meaning
“send” (3992)		
“strong” (1753)		
“delusion” (4106)		
“lie” (5579)		

45. What would be some signs we (or our ecclesia) are being influenced by the ecumenical movement?

2:13 ¹³But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

46. What 'beginning' is being referred to when Paul says "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation"? Eph 1:4.

47. How could God choose us before we have a chance to believe and respond to his call? 1Pet. 1:2 might help.

48. What does "sanctification of the spirit" mean?

49. What does "belief of the truth" mean, in the context of this verse?

50. How would you answer someone who tells you that God is unfair because He doesn't choose some people?

2:14-15 ¹⁴Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Paul highlights the great blessing of being chosen by God and exhorts the brethren and sisters in Thessalonica to stand fast in appreciation of their privileged position.

51. Beside the remarkable blessing of being 'called' or having an opportunity to learn the truth, list some other blessings that we can thank God for.

- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Despite these great blessings, we may at times envy the lifestyle of those we know. But under the veneer of many people's neat and affluent lives, is a feeling of emptiness. During times of stress, their deep-rooted insecurity may surface as they express their genuine concern for the state of the world or personal issues they are grappling with. Imagine how different you would see world events or tragedy in your life if you didn't know God! We have the comfort of knowing that all things work together for good, to

those who love God and are called according to His purpose. With a true understanding of God and His purpose comes true peace, a peace that passeth understanding, a peace that many have never tasted. We really are a privileged people.

Paul encouraged them to hold fast and hold on to the traditions that Paul had passed on to them.

52. What is Paul referring to when he talks about 'tradition'?

Point of interest: 1 Cor. 11:2 uses the same Greek word.

53. Find a verse where Paul warns against holding onto tradition.

54. Explain what traditions we should and shouldn't hold on to.

2:16-17 ¹⁶Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, ¹⁷Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Paul offers another prayer for the brethren and sisters, requesting that their hearts be encouraged and their hands strengthened.

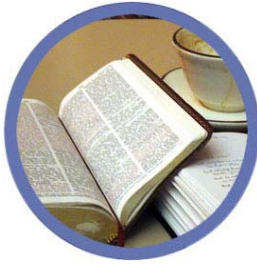
55. What word does Paul use to describe the love God has for His children? What other words are there for love and how is this word distinguished from them?

56. In James 2:8, what type of love are we told to show to our neighbour?

57. In James 2:5 God promises the kingdom to those that love Him. What type of love is referred to in this verse?

58. In the world around us, what type of love is predominant?

59. What type of love is predominant in our lives? How do we shape up when we compare our love with that described in 1 Cor. 13: 4-7?



Suggested reading: 2 Thessalonians 3

3.4 Chapter 3

3:1-2 ¹Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you: ²And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.

On several occasions already, Paul has expressed his prayers on behalf of the Thessalonians.

- 1. For these occasions where Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, summarize what Paul asked for on their behalf.**

Record of Prayer	Summary of Request
1 Thes. 1:1-3	
1 Thes. 2:13	
1 Thes. 3:9-13	
1 Thes. 5:23	
2 Thes. 1:3	
2 Thes. 1:11	
2 Thes. 2:13-17	
2 Thes. 3:5	

We know that Paul was a man of prayer and prayed for his brethren often. He also requests that they too remembered him in their prayers. Paul does not hesitate to request prayers on his behalf.

2. In the following situations, what specifically does Paul ask the brethren and sisters to pray for on his behalf?

Place	Reference	Prayer request
Thessalonica	2 Thes. 3:1-2	
Rome	Rom. 15:30-33	
Ephesus	Eph. 6:18-20	
Colosse	Col. 4:2-4	

3. What is the lesson for us in our prayer habits?

3:3-5 ³But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil.
⁴And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. ⁵And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

4. What does Paul mean when he says 'direct your hearts into the love of God'?

5. What is the Greek word translated 'patient waiting'?

3:6 ⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Paul now gives instruction on how to deal with those who are disorderly in the ecclesia.

6. According to the lexicon, what does the word 'disorderly' (814) mean?

7. What does 'fellowship' (2842) mean?

8. Why should believers withdraw from those who walk disorderly?

Similar commands about withdrawing from fellowship are given by Christ (Matt. 18:15-17), by Paul in his letters to the Romans (Rom. 16:17) and Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:1-13) and by John (2 John 2:9-11).

9. What is the specific reason for withdrawal in 2 Thes. 3? (I.e. what specific behaviour was considered 'disorderly'?).

10. In the other passages that discuss disfellowship, what specific reasons for withdrawal are given?

3:7 ⁷For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

11. What does the word 'follow' (3401) mean?

12. Prior to this occasion, in what way had the believers in Thessalonica followed Paul?

It is quite remarkable that Paul could plead for his brethren and sisters to ‘follow’ him. Today we live in such an individualistic, selfish society that the thought of requesting someone be like you is almost repulsive. However, Paul was a true leader, one that led by example and he knew that if the believers would walk in step with him, they would be getting closer to God.

13. If someone were to follow you, would they be getting closer to God? Why or why not?

Paul realised the power of example. Even though most people today think they are individual thinkers, they are influenced heavily by the examples set by others.

14. What type of ‘examples’ (role models) are most people in the world today influenced by (consciously or subconsciously)?

15. What characteristics do these ‘examples’ (role models) exemplify?

Read 3 John 11. How many of the characteristics that are worshipped today would you classify as ‘good’?

16. To what extent would you consider yourself being influenced by worldly examples (e.g. through choice of media or entertainment)?

17. Do you think it is beneficial to compare ourselves to other brethren or sisters living today, or should we only compare ourselves to Christ?

One real danger is comparing ourselves with the world! This is a very unstable baseline in which to measure ourselves. Although we may always be keeping a 'safe' distance between our way of life and those who live without God, we may still be on a similar decline. Yet God's standards are unchanging!

18. Think of some things that were taboo or were not accepted in your parents' day that you probably wouldn't blink an eyelid about today (if you don't know, ask your parents!).

3:8-9 ⁸Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:
⁹Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Paul is about to address a serious problem in this ecclesia. What makes Paul such an effective leader is his example. We don't like being told what to do and when we are told what to do, we often go out of our way to discredit the person telling us what to do. Have you ever used these phrases before? 'He can speak'... 'who does she think she is'... 'look who's talking!'... 'why don't you try practicing what you preach'. People had tried to discredit Paul on previous occasions. They called his bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible (1 Cor. 10:10), but in this situation, one thing that Paul could not be accused of was being a hypocrite. He calls as witness the example he left for them to follow.

Parents will know the powerful effect of examples and how quickly children are able to identify mismatches between what is said and what is done.

19. Think of some situations when what someone has said has been made so much more powerful because of their example, and one that undermined what they said.

20. What does Paul mean when he says, "not because we have not power"? 1 Cor. 10:23.

21. Think of some cases in your life where the power of example has outweighed the freedom you have to do something?

22. List two ecclesias from which Paul did receive support to supplement his income?

3:10-11 ¹⁰For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

The problem is now highlighted – some were not working and being busybodies! There were those who were not busy in their own business, but busy in the business of others.

23. Why do you think some of the believers in this ecclesia were not working?

24. What does the word 'busybody' (4020) mean?

25. What is the danger of a 'busybody'?

The words idle and busybody go together. A person with too much time on their hands will often begin busying themselves in frivolous matters of no importance.

26. Find a verse in the Old Testament and another verse in the New Testament (besides Thessalonians) that speaks of being idle or being a busybody.

3:13 ¹²Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. ¹³But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

27. What does the word 'quietness' (2271) mean?

Paul exhorts them not to become tired of well doing. Perhaps the reason why some of them had too much time on their hands was not only because they stopped working for their living, but also had stopped being busy in well doing.

Today we live in a world where people exhaust themselves in leisurely pursuits and then find no time for well doing. Isn't it ironic that everything is faster and more efficient today than ever before, yet we find it so hard to find the time to be busy in 'well doing'?

28. What does the Bible teach us to do about this situation? Matt. 6:33 should get you going on the right track.

29. Take a few moments to think about the most important things in your life. Write down the 10 most important things in your life.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

30. How many of these things are first priority in your life?

It's remarkable how the unimportant things so quickly fill our lives! We should, as Paul exhorts us, fill our time with 'well doing'—the important things in life!

The following story illustrates the issue of finding the time for the important things in life:

During a presentation on time management, the class leader pulled out from behind the podium a large glass jar, about 30 cm high and 20 cm wide. He then pulled out some large smooth rocks and started putting them one by one into the glass jar. When he piled the rocks into the jar so no more would fit, he turned to the audience and asked them if the glass jar was full. There was a resounding 'yes'. 'Huh', he said, 'you are all wrong'! From behind the podium he pulled out a container of pebbles and started putting them into the jar. He would shake the jar so the pebbles would fill the pockets of space between the large rocks. He did this until no more spaces were left and again, asked the audience if the jar was full. Although not quite so confident in their answer, the audience clued in to what was going on and said 'no'. Sure enough, out came a container of sand. After the sand had been poured into the jar the question was asked again and this time a resounding 'no'! After the lecturer had finished pouring water into the jar, now full of large rocks, pebbles and sand, he asked the audience what the point of the demonstration was. Someone in the audience yelled out, "to show how much we can squeeze into our day". After a short pause, the lecturer responded, "No, that's not the point at all. The point is, if we didn't put the large rocks in first, they wouldn't have ever made it in".

If we don't put the bigger, more important, things first in our lives – like Bible reading and Bible study – how easy it is to use the excuse 'I never had the time'! Remember, put first things first.

3:14-15 ¹⁴And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Paul provides further instruction on how to deal with a person walking disorderly.

31. In the other passages that talk about disfellowship, what advice is given about treating a disorderly individual?

It should never be forgotten, that the purpose of withdrawing fellowship from anyone is to honour God and to save him or her. It is unfortunate that some take pleasure in seeing others stumble as this not only leads to an artificial inflation of one's own righteousness, but leads to apathy about retrieving the disorderly individual.

32. What two ecclesias in the seven letters of Revelation highlight the two extremes of the fine balance that needs to be found between maintaining purity of doctrine and practice and showing love and mercy. What is the balance?

3:16-18 ¹⁶Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all. ¹⁷The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

The persecution was to continue for many years and no doubt Paul understood that this would be the case.

33. What then, was the peace Paul was requesting for them?

34. How does Paul describe this type of peace in Philippians?

35. What is the significance of Paul recording "the salutation of Paul with mine own hand"?

3.5 The Man of Sin!

From reviewing 2 Thessalonians 2, we have the following clues to help us identify who the man of sin is:

The man of sin/son of perdition;

- a) Emerged from an apostate system which had its beginnings in the first century,
- b) Would be restrained for some time,
- c) Would exist until the return of Christ, when he would be destroyed,
- d) Is lawless,
- e) Opposed the truth,
- f) Exalted himself above all gods and objects of worship,
- g) Sat in the temple of God,
- h) Proclaimed himself as God,
- i) Seduced his converts by so-called miracles and lying wonders.

36. Do you think the man of sin is a single person, the head of an organization, or something else? Explain why.

37. Based on the clues, can this 'man of sin' be some future person or thing? Explain why or why not.

Some may suggest that 'Mohammed' (or Islam in general) is the man of sin referred to by Paul.

38. Does Mohammed fit all the clues? If not, which ones does he not fit?

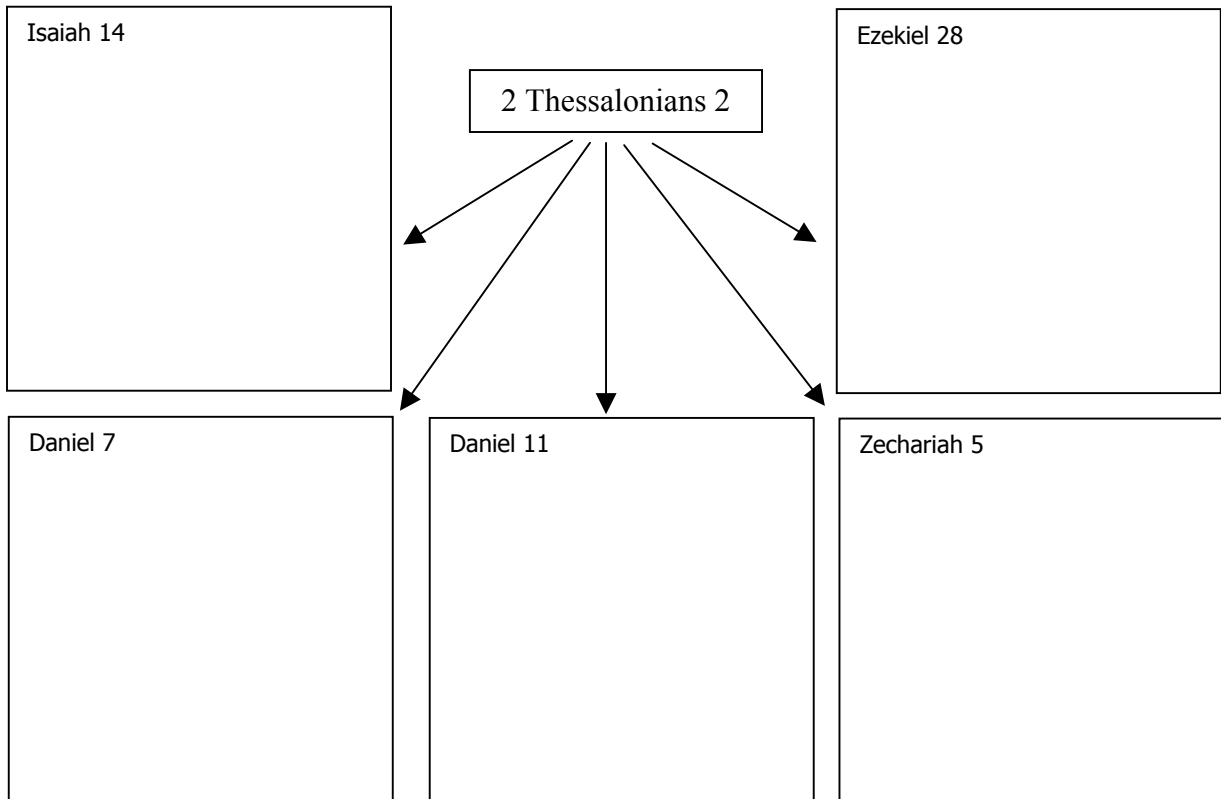
The papacy (or succession of popes) has also been suggested to refer to the man of sin.

39. Does the papacy (succession of popes) fit all the clues?

40. Are there any other people that could potentially fit the description of the man of sin?

41. What or what do you think the restraining power is (as referred to in 2 Thes. 2:6)?

42. Draw some connections between 2 Thessalonians 2 and the following Chapters:



3.6 Appendix A

The following evidence is put forward to support the papacy, headed by a succession of popes, being the man of sin. The evidence is by no means complete. Space is added under each point for you to provide additional evidence. In each instance, think how this description fits in with other prophecies talking about the development of the apostasy.

(a) Emerged from an apostate system which had its beginning in the first century.

The apostasy began within the first century church (Gal. 1:6-9; Acts 20:30). The corrupt church became influential and with the demise of pagan Rome it emerged as a world power. It would become known as the Roman Catholic Church.

Consider the development of the apostasy—its corruption of the truth was not only in doctrine, but also practice. Are there any other doctrines or practices that have been adopted by the Church after 1973?

PROGRESSION OF THE FALLING AWAY	DATE
Immortality of the soul	124 (approx)
Pre-human existence of Christ	124
Substitutionary sacrifice	124
Sprinkling instead of immersion	150
Millennial reign of Christ on the earth considered an allegory	200
Perpetual virginity of Mary	250
Apostolic succession	250
Infant baptism	250
Prayers for the dead	300 (approx)
Constantine makes Christianity the state religion, pagans 'christianized'	312
Jesus a person within the Godhead (council of Nicea, from which emerged the Nicene creed)	325
Veneration of dead saints and angels	375
Use of images in the church	375
The Holy Ghost a person within the Godhead (council of Constantinople)	381
Emperor Theodosius makes apostate Christianity compulsory	395
'Pontifex Maximus' (formerly title of Caesar and high priest of heathen religion) taken as the title of the Bishop of Rome	395
Innocent I calls himself 'Ruler of the Church of God'	402
Doctrine of purgatory	430
Original Sin	430
Exaltation of Mary to 'Mother of God'	431
Leo I takes on the title of 'pope' – the title is conferred on all bishops of Rome posthumously	451
Indulgences for the dead	476
Priests begin to dress differently from laymen	500
Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels	600
Kissing the popes foot begins with Constantine	709
Wearing of papal crown – Nicolas I	858 (approx)
Canonization of dead saints	995
Celibacy of the priesthood decreed by Gregory VII	1079
Plenary indulgences granted to those who took part in the Crusades	1094
Inquisition instituted by Council of Verona	1184
Reading of Bible in common vernacular condemned	1198
Extermination of the Albigenses ordered by Innocent III	1215

Confession to a priest instead of God ordered by Innocent III	1200
Bible forbidden to laymen and is placed on the Index of forbidden books by the Council of Valencia	1229
Limbo originated for the dead unbaptized infants	1245
The House of Mary was purportedly detached from its foundation in Nazareth and transported by angels to Dalmatia and then to Loretto, Italy	1291
Priests refuse to pay taxes	1296
The cup forbidden to the people at communion	1414
Purgatory is made an article of faith	1439
Innocent VIII orders extermination of Waldenses	1484
Ignatius Loyola founded the Jesuits	1534
Doctrine of Immaculate Conception proclaimed by Pius XI	1854
Virgin Mary supposedly appears to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in France	1858
Papal infallibility decreed by 1 st Vatican council	1870
Virgin Mary supposedly appears to three children in Fatima, Portugal	1917
Pope remains silent of Nazi Germany's extermination of 6 million Jews	1943
Assumption of the body of Mary to heaven made An article of faith	1950
Mary proclaimed the 'Queen of Heaven'	1954
Pope Paul reaffirms belief in the Devil	1973
<i>Others?</i>	

Table adapted from Abel, R. 'The Man of Sin', Christadelphian Scripture Study Service, 1994, South Australia.

Additional comments/evidence

(b) Was restrained for some time.

The force restraining the emergence of the man of sin was most probably the pagan Roman Empire. Although we do not have the privilege of knowing what Paul explained to them about this restraining influence, perhaps Paul explained to them the prophecies in Daniel. With the imposition of pagan Rome it was impossible for such an arrogant spiritual power to arise. This restraint was removed allowing the church to emerge in all its glory.

44. Specifically, what prophecies might Paul have made reference to and why? (Daniel is one of them).

Additional comments/evidence

(c) Would exist until the return of Christ, when he would be destroyed.

This rules out a single pope being referred to and suggests a succession of popes or the papacy as a whole.

Additional comments/evidence

(d) He is lawless

The papacy claims to be above law:

“The pope is the supreme judge, even of civil laws, and is incapable of being under any true obligation to them”

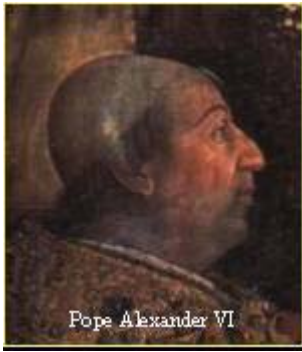
Civilta Cattolica, quoted in Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), p. 481

The Popes have been renowned for their terrible behaviour, they indeed have acted without law and their natures run free:



“Pope John XIII usurped the pontificate, spent his time hunting, in lasciviousness, and monstrous forms of vice; he fled from the trial to which he was summoned, and was stabbed, being taken in the act of adultery”

“Pope Sixtus IV licensed brothels at Rome”



“Pope Alexander VI was one of the greatest and most horrible monsters in nature that could scandalize the holy chair. His beastly morals, his immense ambition, his insatiable avarice, his detestable cruelty, his furious lusts, and monstrous incest with his daughter Lucretia, are, at large, described by Guicciardini Ciaonius, and other authentic papal histories”

Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, edited by Ingram Cobbin (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972), pg. 1113.

Additional comments/evidence

(e) He opposeth the truth.

His teachings are against the truth. But the papacy goes further than just teaching error, they persecute those who believe and practice anything other than what they define as truth. The “Brethren in Christ’ living in Europe were persecuted by the church, many of them lost their lives because of their faith.

Additional comments/evidence

(f) He exalts himself above all gods and objects of worship.

The man of sin loved praise and established himself in a position of enormous power and authority.

The pope has a special ring and indulgences of 500 days were granted to those who kissed the gold ring! He is worshiped above all the relics and idols scattered within catholic cathedrals around the world.



Additional comments/evidence



(g) He sits in the temple of God.

Perhaps a reference to him sitting in a religious office, claiming to be there on God’s behalf. For the pope, this place is St. Peter’s Cathedral and the Vatican in Rome.

In Catholic ceremony, it is said that the pope “presides in the temple of the Lord”.

Additional comments/evidence



(h) He proclaims himself as God.

It is amazing the titles that have been ascribed to popes. Here are some of them:

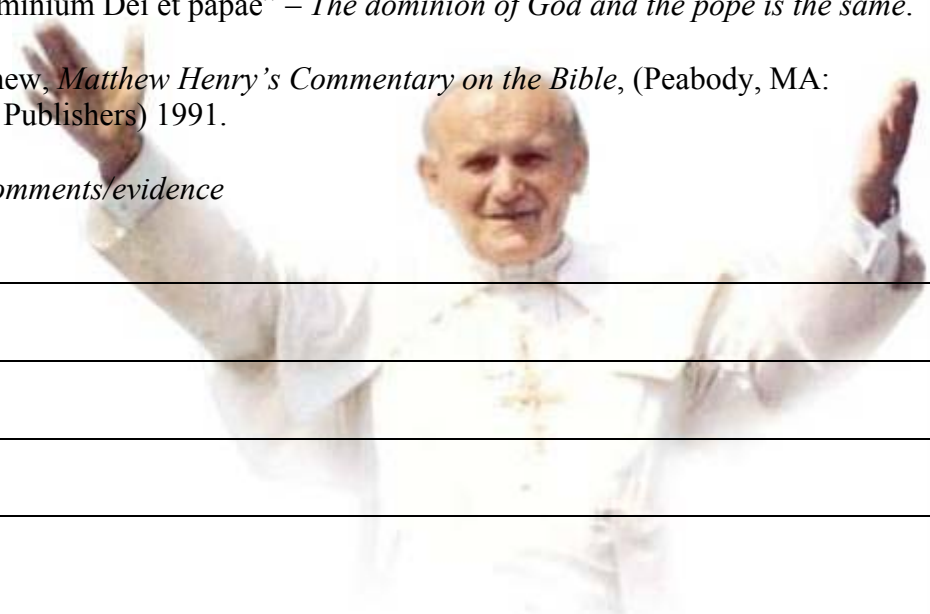
“Dominus Deus noster papa” - *Our Lord God the Pope*

“Deus alter in terra” – *Another God on earth*

“Idem est dominium Dei et papae” – *The dominion of God and the pope is the same.*

Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1991.

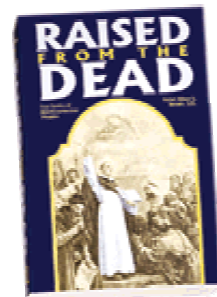
Additional comments/evidence

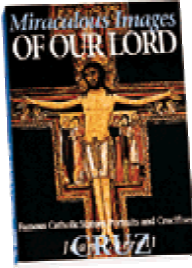


(i) Converts to this error are seduced by so called miracles and wonders.

The following books with their glowing ‘blurbs’, available from all major Catholic bookshops, bear witness to the above fact!

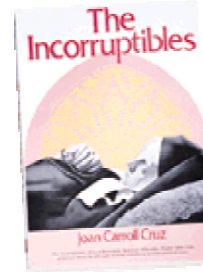
*“Stories from the lives of St. Francis Xavier, St. Patrick, St. John Bosco, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Rose of Lima, Bl. Margaret of Castello, etc. Includes the raising of persons who had drowned, been hanged, of those whose bodies had been mutilated, suffered decay, been reduced to skeletons or been buried for several years. Also includes young children, unbaptized infants, persons executed for a crime and persons raised to testify in criminal cases or to testify to some religious truths, and of persons who would have been condemned to Hell had they not been called back from Hell for another chance. Also, descriptions of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory by temporarily dead persons and an analysis of contemporary "after death" experiences. **Plus, other wonders**, such as levitation, bilocation, total abstinence from food or drink, miraculous survival of intense heat--and much, much more! Many pictures of the saints and their miracles.”*





“42 remarkable, true accounts about miraculous manifestations of Our Lord from various parts of the globe, richly illustrated by actual photos. Miraculous statues, crucifixes and other holy images. Includes The Holy Shroud, Veil of Veronica, Infant Jesus of Prague, San Damiano Crucifix (cover photo) from which Our Lord spoke to St. Francis, etc., etc. Shows Our Lord's infinite love for us—causing Him to manifest it through His venerated images. A well of inspiration; a buttress to our faith in Christ!”

“The stories of 102 canonized Saints and Beatified whose bodies were found incorrupt long periods after their deaths, many of which endured abnormally adverse conditions in remaining intact. A fascinating and absolutely documented study—and one which will reinforce people's faith in the Catholic Church—the only religion that possesses the phenomenon of bodily incorruption. A now classic book that belongs in every Catholic home”



Additional comments/evidence

