

## 1-2 Thessalonians Ep 224



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

### 1 Thessalonians – Introduction

1 Thessalonians is often regarded as the earliest document in the New Testament, likely written around the year 50 by the apostle Paul. The vast majority of biblical scholars agree that this was a genuine letter of Paul.<sup>1</sup> This authentic letter of Paul holds significant historical value. According to the account in the book of Acts, Paul's mission to Europe began when he received a vision in which a Macedonian man implored him to come and provide assistance (Acts 16:9). Responding to this call, Paul traveled to Philippi and then proceeded to Thessalonica. In Thessalonica, Paul engaged with both Jews and Greek adherents who were drawn to the teachings of the Jewish scriptures. However, after facing opposition and encountering riots, Paul eventually departed and continued his journey to Athens and Corinth (Acts 17:1-15). This sequence of events, as described in the book of Acts, provides a contextual backdrop to the letter of 1 Thessalonians.

From Paul's letter to the Thessalonians we learn that while he was in Athens Paul sent his companion Timothy back to Thessalonica (a journey of about 300 miles) to see how the Christians there were doing (1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:6). It probably took Timothy about 3 weeks to get to Thessalonica if he went by foot, and so after a long journey Timothy returned to Paul in Athens or in Corinth with his report. Paul's letter to the saints in 1 Thessalonians is his response based on Timothy's report.

The letter is full of love and affection, with Paul referring to the saints as family, calling them his brothers and sisters. Though in the Greek it says only "brothers" the text meant "all of you as siblings in the family of Jesus" ... the message was one of love for his family in Christ.

Keener explains:

While preaching Jesus as Messiah (the Jewish king) in Thessalonica, Paul had been accused of preaching another king besides Caesar (Acts 17:7; cf. "kingdom" in 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5). The very young Thessalonian church continued to experience persecution after Paul's departure, but he encourages them with the promise of a future hope, which applies even to those who have already died (1 Thess 4:13-18). Paul borrows much of the language used by Jesus and Jewish apocalyptic motifs that had become part of the early Christian movement.<sup>2</sup>

### Second Coming Theology

<sup>1</sup> Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#), IVP Academic, 2014, p. 581.

<sup>2</sup> Keener, *Background*, p. 581.

1 Thessalonians records Paul's thoughts that Jesus was coming soon. Paul says:

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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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 them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4.13-18)

This text deals with the second coming of Jesus Christ, something Paul basically tells the saints in Thessalonica is going to happen soon. It is clear that in this text in its historical context that Paul meant that these people would be around when Jesus came back in this triumphant second coming. In another letter written to the saints in Corinth Paul even goes so far as to tell the saints not to bother getting married because Jesus is coming soon! (1 Corinthians 7.29)<sup>3</sup>

According to the bulk of Christian scholars studying the text of 1 Thessalonians, the consensus is that Paul believes that the Second Coming of Jesus would be imminent, and that knowing this would be a comfort to them. They would see Jesus when he comes again, and those that died prior to his coming would meet them at that day (1 Thessalonians 4.17).<sup>4</sup>

### Why It Matters

Early Christians believed Jesus would come again – and in this text, it seems they believed it would happen in their lifetimes. Knowing that their expectations were not correct should give modern Christians pause. How do we read texts? How do we see prophecy? A patriarchal blessing that promises numerous children and long life may be interpreted many ways. Could the promise be that in the next life some of these promises would be fulfilled? Knowing and understanding how prophecy works can be useful here.

We see this in many other Old Testament prophecies, such as the promises made to Abraham. The promises made to Abraham are fulfilled in the lives of his descendants, but were not necessarily fulfilled

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<sup>3</sup> This is more complicated than at first glance. The text may be saying something else entirely. It may be referring to an impending crisis rather than the second coming. The word for "time" that Paul is using in 1 Corinthians 7 is not χρόνος (*chronos*), a word describing time in terms of specific hours and minutes, but rather καιρός (*kairos*), a word denoting a critical period of time where much is at stake. For more discussion on Paul's use of Kairos, see Richard Draper and Michael Rhodes, [Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians](#), BYU Studies, 2017, p. 388-389. It is also important to note that the Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Corinthians 7 changes the entire argument in the text. Essentially Paul is reworked in this text, giving advice to those "sent forth unto the ministry" or missionaries laboring in the field. These individuals are in a totally different set of circumstances from the everyday Christian believer.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Borg writes, "Paul expected the second coming soon, and it didn't happen... The fact that Paul was wrong about the nearness of the second coming does not invalidate his thought as a whole. Nevertheless, the conclusion of most modern mainstream scholars is that Paul and many early Christians thought Jesus would return soon to complete what he had begun. Marcus Borg, [Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written](#), Harper One, 2012, , p. 39.

in his lifetime. One such example is the land promise made to him (Genesis 17:8). He was promised that he would possess all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession! Abraham didn't even have land to bury his wife when she died and had to negotiate for a piece of land in Hebron to bury her (Genesis 23). Yet Abraham pressed on in faith, knowing that the promises were sure and God would keep his word, even if he (or we) don't totally see the entire picture.

## **1 Thessalonians Outline**

### I. Introduction (1 Thessalonians 1)

#### A. Greeting from Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1)

### II. Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' Faith (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10)

#### A. Commendation of the Thessalonians' faith, love, and endurance (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

#### B. Acknowledgment of their conversion and reception of the Gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6)

“election of God” (1 Thes. 1.4).

The term "election" appears seven times in the New Testament in the King James Version (KJV). It signifies a divine selection or a general choosing out. However, the interpretation of "God's elect" in the KJV can vary, particularly in Reformed and Calvinistic doctrines where it is understood as unconditional election. Nevertheless, Paul's choice of the Greek word has a broader meaning. While many King James translators and Protestant movements historically believed in predestined election, the prophet Joseph Smith received a different understanding of "election" as revealed in D&C 29:7. According to this revelation, "the elect" are those who hear God's voice and do not harden their hearts. In this sense, agency and love play a role on both sides. The "elect" are those who actively seek closeness with God and humbly receive His guidance. God extends His grace to humanity, but individuals must choose to accept it willingly.

“our good news did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance’ (1 Thes. 1.5).

Paul provides his own definition of conversion, highlighting the significance of the Spirit. Throughout his Epistles, Paul frequently mentions the Spirit as a beloved topic, attesting to its powerful presence and its ability to convey truth through logical words. This emphasis on the Spirit aligns with the major theme of the restored gospel, as evident in scriptural references such as D&C 6:14–15, 23; 8:1, 3, 23; and 9:7–9. Paul uses the term "power" to describe the Spirit, a coupling that occurs ten times in the Bible. In contrast, The Book of Mormon reveals a remarkable fifty-seven instances where "power" is linked with God's Spirit, indicating a higher frequency compared to the Bible on a per-thousand-word basis. The Doctrine and Covenants takes this association even further, with a concentration of thirty-five connections—exceeding both the Bible and The Book of Mormon. Notably, while the Bible features the phrase "power of the Holy Ghost" only once (Romans 15:13), the Book of Mormon emphasizes it thirty times, reinforcing the Restoration's emphasis on the Spirit's profound power.

#### C. Reflection on their positive influence and example to other believers (1 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

“Ye turned to God from idols” (1 Thes. 1.9).

Statues of deities were pervasive; some Gentile intellectuals (as opposed to the masses) viewed them as merely reminders of the deities, but Jews rejected them as idols. Jewish texts often described the radical change required of pagans converting to Judaism in terms like those Paul uses here; the Roman writer Tacitus also criticizes Judaism for making proselytes despise the gods and so reject their own countries and families. Foreign religions could become accepted in Thessalonica, however. Among major cults in Thessalonica were the Egyptian cults of Serapis and Isis, as well as those of the more traditional Greek gods like Dionysus and the Roman cult of the emperor; some of the upper class sponsored the cult of the Cabiri from the Aegean island of Samothrace.<sup>5</sup>

and to wait for His Son from the heavens, whom He did raise out of the dead -- Jesus, who is rescuing us from the anger that is coming (1 Thes. 1.10 KJV).

καὶ ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν Ἰησοῦν τὸν ρυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης “Even to wait for his Son out of the heavens, who he, *God the Father*, raised from the dead, Jesus, the one rescuing us from the coming wrath!” (1 Thes. 1.10, my translation).

Initially, the early Christians held the belief that the return of Jesus to establish His rule and reign was imminent, as evidenced in Acts 1:10–11 and Revelation 1:1, 3. Even Paul, on certain occasions, expressed expectations of witnessing the beginning of the millennium within his own lifetime, as seen in passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 and Hebrews 9:28.<sup>6</sup> However, Jesus Himself stated that the exact timing was known only to the Father and not even the angels or the Son (Mark 13:32, 26–31; Acts 1:7). They did not fully comprehend that Jesus came during the "meridian of time" and that His reign would follow a period of apostasy and subsequent restoration (2 Timothy 4:3). In reality, each individual has only their own lifetime to await before standing before the Lord. Thus, Paul's exhortation to be watchful is relevant for each person in every generation.

### III. Paul's Ministry and Relationship with the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:1-20)

#### A. Defense of Paul's conduct during his time among them (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

For yourselves have known, brethren, our entrance in unto you, that it did not become vain, 2 but having both suffered before, and having been injuriously treated (as ye have known) in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the good news of God in much conflict, 3 for our exhortation [is] not out of

<sup>5</sup> Keener, [Background](#), p. 583.

<sup>6</sup> These are just a few of the examples that express Paul's thinking on this matter. Paul's writings in the New Testament indeed contain instances where he expresses the belief that Jesus' return would occur within his own lifetime. Here are a few more examples:

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: In this passage, Paul writes about the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead. He includes himself among those who will be alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, suggesting an expectation of the event happening within his generation.
2. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31: Paul, in discussing matters of marriage and earthly concerns, states, "The time is limited. From now on, those who have wives should live as though they had none." This indicates a sense of urgency and a belief that the present time is short, implying an imminent expectation of Jesus' return.
3. 2 Corinthians 6:2: Paul writes, "Now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." This sense of immediacy and the present time being the opportune moment reflects a belief that the end times were near.

deceit, nor out of uncleanness, nor in guile, 4 but as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the good news, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who is proving our hearts, 5 for at no time did we come with speech of flattery, (as ye have known,) nor in a pretext for covetousness, (God [is] witness!) (1 Thes. 2.1-5, YLT)

The KJV is a bit clunky in this bit, in my opinion. Paul, despite enduring significant physical abuse, did not fear what men could do to him. His primary concern lay in fulfilling his responsibility to answer God's call. A similar sentiment was expressed by Joseph Smith in his youth, writing, ““Who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? . . . I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation” (JS-H 1:25). Beyond the realm of missionary work, disciples are admonished to speak not to please men, but to please God. Paul emphasizes that God will test and examine our hearts, highlighting the importance of demonstrating our unwavering devotion to God in all circumstances.

One way to read these verses (as Bryce did in the podcast) is to see Paul showing his hearers how not to teach the gospel. We are to avoid certain behaviors, like flattering words (1 Thes. 2.5), our own glory (1 Thes. 2.6), and covetousness (1 Thes. 2.5).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught:

Even though what is being taught is the truth, it is not of God unless it is being taught in the Lord's way. The great truths of the gospel must not be presented in the wrong setting, given voice by unworthy persons, accompanied by the wrong kind of music, or in other ways cheapened by association with what is not conducive to the spirit by which gospel truths must be taught.<sup>7</sup>

Elder Boyd K. Packer taught:

The spiritual part of us and the emotional part of us are so closely linked that it is possible to mistake an emotional impulse for something spiritual. We occasionally find people who receive what they assume to be spiritual promptings from God, when those promptings are either centered in the emotions or are from the adversary.<sup>8</sup>

Elder David A. Bednar taught:

We must be careful to remember in our service that we are conduits and channels; we are not the light...It is never about me and it is never about you. In fact, anything you or I do as an instructor that knowingly and intentionally draws attention to self—in the messages we present, in the methods we use, or in our personal demeanor—is a form of priestcraft that inhibits the teaching effectiveness of the Holy Ghost.<sup>9</sup>

“even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1 Thes. 2.7).

Well-to-do Romans often had slave or free wet nurses to care for young children, as did some, though fewer, lower-class Romans. According to the ideal of the educated Romans who could

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<sup>7</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, *The Lord's Way*, Deseret Book, 1991, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 56.

<sup>9</sup> David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Address to CES Religious Educators*, 3 Feb. 2006, 4.

afford them, wet nurses should be educated so they could teach the young children; their most important trait, however, was their gentleness. They often endeared themselves to young children, who when they grew older frequently freed those nurses who had been slaves. The harshest Cynics criticized those who were gentle like wet nurses or the aged; other thinkers, like Dio Chrysostom, insisted that such gentleness should be cultivated... The image could thus be one of a nursing mother, although all Paul's hearers would have known of the custom of wet nurses as well. The particular image—wet nurse or nursing mother—does not affect Paul's point: gentleness. People in the eastern Mediterranean, where nursemaids were less frequent, often considered mothers more affectionate than fathers (see 4 Maccabees 15:4), although Roman culture frequently emphasized mothers' severity.<sup>10</sup>

“We would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God” (1 Thes. 2.9).

The Thessalonian Christians were mostly poor (cf. 2 Cor 8:1-2) and did not share some of the Corinthians' objections to manual labor (see comment on 1 Cor 9:6). The Christians in Philippi had sent him funds while he was in Thessalonica (Phil 4:15-16), but Paul still had to labor as an artisan. Because he could have set up shop in the marketplace, he could have done work and gained customers even if he was there only a brief time (cf. Acts 17:2, though Paul may have remained in Thessalonica longer than he spoke in the synagogue). Many Jewish teachers in this period had another trade besides teaching, often learned from their fathers. “Night and day” was a common phrase, which could mean parts of the night and parts of the day. A manual laborer began work around sunrise and could talk with visitors while working; but from the early afternoon on Paul could use his time for more direct evangelism.<sup>11</sup>

B. Expressing his affection for the Thessalonians as a spiritual family (1 Thessalonians 2:13-16)

C. Recounting his efforts to share the Gospel and his longing to see them again (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20)

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 hindered us. 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 (1 Thes. 2.17-20)

In his writing, Paul reveals that he had made previous attempts to return to his newfound friends in Thessalonica, and he holds them dear in his thoughts. However, he laments that his plans were hindered by Satan's interference. As the letter progresses, Paul mentions that he sent Timothy in his stead to fulfill the intended visitation (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; 2 And 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 (1 Thes. 3.1-2)

Letters of friendship often expressed longing to see another person, sometimes even grief over being separated. Even when the expressions were formulaic, they were usually no less genuine

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<sup>10</sup> Keener, [Background](#), p. 584.

<sup>11</sup> Keener, [Background](#), p. 585.

(compare modern greeting cards for various occasions). Timothy and possibly Silas rejoined Paul in Athens, and he dispatched them back to Macedonia while he labored alone in Athens. Luke omits some of these details in the account in Acts (Acts 17:14-16; 18:5), as one would expect; any author who has written a readable narrative knows that one cannot report every detail and must smooth the narrative out. But the correspondences between the accounts are striking, while the divergences indicate that Luke probably did not derive his account from this letter.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV. Instructions on Holy Living (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

##### A. Exhortation to live in a way that pleases God (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2)

Paul shifts his focus to the central purpose of his Epistle, addressing the areas where their faith may be lacking. He introduces his intended message with a transitional phrase such as "At last," "Finally," or "Furthermore," (Λοιπὸν οὖν) signaling a new direction in his writing. The underlying objective is for them to lead a worthy life that pleases their Heavenly Father. The young saints have already experienced the confirming witness of the truth, prompting Paul to now encourage them to progressively live according to the guidance of the Spirit and in accordance with the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Using the term "walk" (περιπατέω) in an ethical sense, denoting one's conduct and way of life, Paul delves into **five topics** that arise from their inquiries, observations made by Timothy, or guidance from the Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

##### B. Encouragement to practice sexual purity and brotherly love (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: 4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour (1 Thes. 4.3-4).

The initial concern addressed is the importance of abstaining from sexual immorality, (ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας "you are to hold yourself off from *porneias*/fornication," 1 Thes. 4.3, my translation) encompassing acts such as fornication, incest, and adultery, among others. The significance of upholding the law of chastity was evident in the prevalent challenges faced in the Greco-Roman world, as **Paul repeatedly emphasizes it in nine of his letters**. Verse four of the letter sparks considerable debate among biblical translators. The phrase "possess his vessel" in the KJV can be read as exercising control over one's own body and actions. Scholars vary in their interpretation of this bit here in Paul's letter.

Craig Keener explains:

"Vessel" (kjb, nasb) was commonly used as a metaphor for one's "body" (niv, nrsv) in Greek and Diaspora Jewish literature; it was occasionally applied to one's wife (in some Jewish texts and, on one interpretation, in 1 Pet 3:7). It probably means "body" here, although the matter is debated.

<sup>12</sup> Keener, *Background*, p. 586.

<sup>13</sup> The five topics include: chastity, the dead coming back when Jesus returns (1 Thes. 4.13-18), the timing of the Second Coming of Jesus (1 Thes. 5.1-11), how they treat each other (1 Thes. 5.12-15), and how they should relate with their Heavenly Father (1 Thes. 5.16-22).

<sup>14</sup> σκεῦος - a vessel, implement, equipment or apparatus (literally or figuratively [specially, a wife as contributing to the usefulness of the husband]):—goods, sail, stuff, vessel.



Proper treatment of one's sexuality was a matter of serious honor and shame (among Greeks and Romans, especially for women).<sup>15</sup>

John Tvedtness adds this insight:

Offering vessels provide a comparison with human beings throughout the scriptures. Just as an offering vessel can be sacred when presented at the temple and profane when reused for common produce, humans can be sanctified or polluted. In both the Old and New Testament, God is likened to a potter and human beings to the clay from which he makes pots (Isa. 64:8; Jer. 18:6; Lam. 4:2; Rom. 9:20-21; Rev. 2:27). Paul compared humans to 'vessels of wrath fitted to destruction' and 'vessels of mercy,' depending on their obedience to God (Rom. 9:22-23; compare D&C 76:33). Elsewhere, the righteous are called 'chosen vessels of the Lord' (Moro. 7:31; Acts 9:15). Alma spoke of Mary, the mother of Christ, as 'a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel' (Alma 7:10). Similarly, Paul, speaking of chastity, counseled the Thessalonians 'that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour' (1 Thes. 4:3-5). He told Timothy that he who purges himself from sin becomes 'a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use' (2 Tim. 2:20-21). The 'sanctified' vessel is a clear reference to vessels dedicated to the Lord in the ancient temple. Elsewhere, Paul compares the human body to the temple of God itself, saying that God will inhabit that temple only as long as it remains chaste (1 Cor. 6:18-19). The idea gives meaning to a frequently quoted passage: 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord' (Isa. 52:11; 3 Ne. 20:41; D&C 38:42; 133:5).<sup>16</sup>

not in the affection of desire, as also the nations that were not knowing God (1 Thes. 4:5). The KJV uses "concupiscence," a word that very few of my students have ever used or read before.

C. Instruction on leading a quiet and respectable life (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12)

## V. The Hope of the Lord's Return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

A. Teaching on the resurrection and the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

1 Thes. 4:15 Greek: Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου ὅτι **ἡμεῖς** οἱ ζῶντες οἱ **περιλειπόμενοι** εἰς **τὴν παρουσίαν** τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς **κοιμηθέντας**

"For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that **we** the living ones **surviving** until **the Parousia/Coming** of the Lord, will not precede those *saints* that are **sleeping**" (1 Thes. 4:15, my translation).

In this passage, Paul addresses another misconception among the early believers. He seeks to clarify their understanding concerning the Second Coming of Jesus, emphasizing that when He returns, He will be accompanied by the righteous who have passed from their mortal existence. Paul shares the teachings he received from Jesus Himself. The text indicates that the saints, including Paul, anticipate being alive when Jesus returns, as it uses the inclusive pronoun (ἡμεῖς) "we." However, the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) modifies this by replacing "we" with "they," implying that those who are alive at that

<sup>15</sup> Keener, *Background*, p. 587.

<sup>16</sup> John A. Tvedtness, "Masada and Religion in First-Century Judea", *BYU Studies*, vol. 36 (1996-97), Number 3--1996-97.



time will witness the Second Coming. This adjustment allows for a potentially longer period before Jesus' return. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the early Christians generally held the belief that Jesus' Second Coming would occur within their own lifetime or in the near future.

#### B. Comforting those concerned about deceased believers (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thes. 4.17).

The Greek word *harpazo* - ἄρπάζω and the Latin term *rapemur* which translates to "caught up," has given rise to the colloquial English phrase "the rapture," commonly used to refer to the Second Coming of the Lord, especially by non-Latter-day Saint Christians. It depicts the righteous being caught up alongside those who have already been resurrected. This imagery aligns with references found in passages like Daniel 7.13, D&C 77.12 and D&C 88.95-96. As part of the completion of the saints' faith, Paul shares this encouragement regarding the hope embedded within God's Plan of Salvation. It is likely that Paul clarified this concept for the Thessalonians due to their confusion or their queries regarding the resurrection of the deceased.

#### C. Urging readiness and watchfulness for the Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

"As a thief in the night" (1 Thes. 5.2).

Elder Maxwell taught:

True, when He comes, Jesus will come 'as a thief in the night' (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Those unaware will be as if sleeping, only to be interrupted suddenly by the unexpected. The 'intruder,' however, will be the Lord of the Manor come home! A secular society is the most likely cultural candidate to be especially surprised by a Jesus who comes 'as a thief in the night.' A society indifferent, even hostile, to things spiritual will be truly astonished. The boredom of self-serving secularism and the masking of materialism will cause their devotees to be unaware of events which foretell Christ's coming. One who is wise, however, will take time both to smell the flowers and to check the leaves on the fig tree.<sup>17</sup>

The Thessalonian saints were already familiar with Paul's eschatological message. The phrase "times and the seasons" in the KJV refers to the anticipated moment when the Lord will return and establish His glorious reign on the earth. However, Paul deliberately avoids discussing the precise timing with them, as it remains unpredictable. Jesus also conveyed a similar message in Matthew 24:36–37, 43 and Luke 12:44 (JST). There were several instances where Paul may have been exposed to Jesus' teachings, including his fifteen-day visit with Peter (Galatians 1:18). To emphasize the need for vigilance, Paul employs the imagery of "a thief in the night," underscoring that those who are not watchful will be caught unprepared. The notion of an unexpected day of the Lord's coming was prophesied as far back as Amos 5:18. Despite the unexpected nature, Paul's choice of imagery—comparing it to a woman in labor—carries predictable warnings, such as the signs of her progress (size, gestation period, pain, contractions, baby's position, etc.). Similarly, the timing of the Second Coming can generally be estimated when the signs are fulfilled. This imagery is frequently employed in the Old Testament,

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<sup>17</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, [That Ye May Believe](#), Bookcraft, 1992, p. 171.

including Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; Jeremiah 6:24; 49:24; and Micah 4:10. Jesus also utilized it to describe His own death (John 16:21).

Keener explains:

These “birth pangs” (1 Thes. 5.3) are not the initial or age-long ones of Matthew 24:8, but the final pangs of destruction in the day of the Lord (cf. Is 13:8). Birth pangs were a common image of agony and destruction (Ps 48:6; Is 21:3; 26:17-18; 42:14; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 49:22-24; 50:43; Hos 13:13). Sudden destruction was also a common biblical idea (Is 47:11; Jer 6:26), and unexpected judgment on the wicked became a regular motif of Jewish apocalyptic; but given the other echoes in the context Paul may here especially reflect Jesus’ teaching (Mt 24:36-44). The Jewish people knew well about false peace: false prophets prophesying peace had led to Judah’s judgment in the Old Testament (e.g., Jer 6:14); the first-century b.c. Roman general Pompey had entered Jerusalem falsely pretending peace; and roughly two decades after Paul wrote this letter, false prophets of victory led the Jerusalemites to slaughter at the hands of Titus’s Roman army. Paul’s hearers in Thessalonica, however, could take his words as an attack on claims of earlier Roman emperors to have established peace and security (*pax et securitas*) throughout the empire. Teachings like this one sounded subversive and may have aroused persecution against Christians (Acts 17:7).<sup>18</sup>

## VI. Final Exhortations and Closing Remarks (1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

### A. Encouragement to respect and esteem church leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

The term for those who “have charge” (nasb, nrsv) or “are over” (kjv) the Thessalonian Christians can refer to oversight more generally, but was also sometimes applied in the Greco-Roman world to patrons, sponsors of clients and religious associations. If that sense is in view here, these would be the Christians who opened their homes for the churches to meet in them and sponsored them, providing what financial and political help they could (the Thessalonian patrons probably included Jason—Acts 17:5-9). That they would also “admonish” (not just “instruct”—nasb, gnt) is not unusual, since they would probably be the wealthier members of the congregation and hence better educated. (Most people in antiquity were functionally illiterate; exhorting was generally easier for those with the training and leisure to read the Scriptures, since the Scriptures were the source of exhortations in both synagogue and church.) If no one was particularly well-to-do, those who were relatively better off would have to perform the functions of patron as best they could, requiring either smaller or more crowded house churches; but the congregation probably included relatively well-to-do people (Acts 17:4).<sup>19</sup>

### B. Exhortation to live in peace and promote harmony among themselves (1 Thessalonians 5:14-22)

“rejoice evermore” (1 Thes. 5.16).

“pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5.17).

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<sup>18</sup> Keener, p. 591.

<sup>19</sup> Keener, [Background](#), p. 592.

Even the strictest pietists of Judaism did not pray all day; but they prayed regularly, much and faithfully. "Pray without ceasing" could mean this type of prayer or to carry the attitude of prayer with oneself throughout the day, not just in corporate worship or personal quiet times.<sup>20</sup>

"in everything give thanks" (1 Thes. 5.18).

"quench not the Spirit" (1 Thes. 5.19).

"prove all things" (1 Thes. 5.21).

"abstain from the appearance of evil" (1 Thes. 5.22).

I cannot help wondering about parents who adopt the attitude with their children, 'do as I say, not as I do' with respect to using harmful substances, going to inappropriate movies, and other questionable activities. Children often take license from their parents' behavior and go beyond the values the parents wish to establish. There is one safe parental rule: do not just avoid evil, avoid the very appearance of evil (see 1 Thes. 5:22).<sup>21</sup>

C. Concluding prayers, greetings, and benediction (1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss (1 Thes. 5.26).

Kisses were a common expression of affectionate greeting among individuals who shared an intimate or respectful relationship. Paul, in his writings, encourages this form of greeting on four occasions. It's worth noting that a "holy kiss" was not a custom originating from Greek culture but rather a tradition observed in early Christianity. This practice may explain why some European Catholic countries greet friends by touching cheeks and exchanging air kisses (la bise). Although the Joseph Smith Translation altered the specific wording of this verse to read "with a holy salutation," the phrase "holy kiss" is still found in four other Epistles (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14).

## 2 Thessalonians

Paul, expecting to be alive when Jesus comes again (see 1 Thes. 4.14-17), shifts in tone in the second letter to the Thessalonians, at least as to his expectation of the Parousia, or Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> It is for this reason that several scholars see this as evidence that perhaps one of Paul's disciples penned this letter after Paul's death, perhaps as late as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. To flesh out this argument, I turn to Bart Ehrman:

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<sup>20</sup> Keener, p. 592.

<sup>21</sup> Elder James E. Faust, "[Unwanted Messages](#)," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986.

<sup>22</sup> It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians was first questioned. In 1801 Schmidt published a work that introduced one of the classic arguments against Pauline authorship. The argument was based upon the perceived change in theological perspective concerning the parousia. It was suggested that in 2 Thessalonians there is the presentation of an eschatological timeline which both lessened the imminence of the second coming and is coupled with the introduction of various apocalyptic features or figures resulting in a non-Pauline perspective on the Parousia. See: Schmidt J.E. Christian 1801 *Vermutungen über die beiden Briefe an die Thessalonicher*, *Bibliothek für Kritik und Exegese des N.T.*, t. II, fasc. 3 (Hadamar).

Paul himself thought the end was coming in his lifetime. Nowhere is this more clear than in one of the letters we are sure he wrote, 1 Thessalonians. Paul wrote the Christians in Thessalonica, because some of them had become disturbed over the death of a number of their fellow believers. When he converted these people, Paul had taught them that the end of the age was imminent, that they were soon to enter the kingdom when Jesus returned. But members of the congregation had died before it happened. Had they lost out on their heavenly reward? Paul writes to assure the survivors that, no, even those who have died will be brought into the kingdom. In fact, when Jesus returns in glory on the clouds of heaven, “the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air” (4:17). Read the verse carefully: Paul expects to be one of the ones who will still be alive when it happens.

He goes on to say that it will be a sudden, unexpected event. That day will come “like a thief in the night,” and when people think that all is well, “sudden destruction will come upon them” (5:2–3). The Thessalonians should be alert and prepared, because, as with the labor pains of a pregnant woman, it is possible to know that it will come very soon, but you can’t predict the exact moment.

It is precisely this emphasis on the suddenness of the reappearance of Jesus, which will catch people by surprise, that makes the *second* letter that Paul allegedly wrote to the Thessalonians so interesting. This too is a book written about the second coming of Jesus, but now a completely different problem is being addressed. The readers have been “led astray” by a letter that has apparently been forged in Paul’s name (2:2) saying that “the day of the Lord is at hand.” The author of 2 Thessalonians, claiming to be Paul, argues that the end is not, in fact, coming right away. Certain things have to happen first. There will be some kind of political or religious uprising and rebellion, and an Antichrist-like figure will appear who will take his seat in the Temple of Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. Only then will the “Lord Jesus” come to “destroy him with the breath of his mouth” (2:3–8).

In other words, the Thessalonians can rest assured they are not yet at the final moment of history when Jesus reappears. They will know when it is almost here by the events that transpire in fulfillment of Scripture. But can this be by the same author who wrote the other letter, 1 Thessalonians? Compare the scenario of Jesus’s appearance in 2 Thessalonians, according to which it will be a while yet and preceded by recognizable events, with that of 1 Thessalonians, when the end will come like a “thief in the night,” who appears when people least expect it. There seems to be a fundamental disparity between the teachings of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, which is why so many scholars think that 2 Thessalonians is not by Paul.<sup>23</sup> It is particularly

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<sup>23</sup> F.F. Bruce explains it this way: “In 1 Thessalonians the Parousia is spoken of as if it were likely to take place in the lifetime of most of the readers (and writers); it will come when least expected, “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5:2). This may have led some readers to conclude that it was so imminent that there was no point in going on with the ordinary concerns of daily life; perhaps, indeed, it had already arrived. To correct this error the writers say in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12, “The Parousia is imminent indeed, but not so imminent as all that. Do not be misled into thinking that the great day is already with us. It will come soon enough, but certain things must first take place—the climax of world rebellion against God and the appearance of the man who incarnates the spirit of rebellion and claims for himself the worship due to God. When he has reached the summit of his power, then the Parousia of

interesting that the author of 2 Thessalonians indicates that he taught his converts all these things already, when he was with them (2:5). If that's the case, then how can one explain 1 Thessalonians? The problem there is that people think the end is supposed to come any day now, based on what Paul told them. But according to 2 Thessalonians Paul never taught any such thing.<sup>24</sup> He taught that a whole sequence of events had to transpire before the end came. Moreover, if that is what he taught them, as 2 Thessalonians insists, then it is passing strange that he never reminds them of this teaching in 1 Thessalonians, where they obviously think that they were taught something else. Paul probably did not write 2 Thessalonians.<sup>25</sup>

Scholars have engaged in discussions regarding the chronological order of the Thessalonian letters, and the prevailing view suggests that 1 Thessalonians was written before 2 Thessalonians (the original letters were not titled or numbered, of course). It is likely that the messenger who carried Paul's first letter has since returned, bringing news about the situation in Thessalonica. It appears that certain members of the Christian community have enthusiastically embraced Paul's teachings about the future hope, but without fully grasping the nuances and qualifications he had previously emphasized. Consequently, some have come to the mistaken belief that the day of the Lord has already arrived (2:2). I see traction in Bart Ehrman's argument that 2 Thessalonians was written in the second century. I am also open to various other interpretations, such as the idea that Paul came into new information, or that perhaps these two letters were actually four separate and authentic letters, later redacted.<sup>26</sup> Regardless of who or when this letter was actually written, it stands canonized today and has value for a Latter-day Saint audience.

## 2 Thessalonians Outline

### I. Introduction and Greeting (2 Thessalonians 1:1-2)

I appreciate Bryce sharing the idea by Elder Maxwell in regards to our discussion of 2 Thessalonians authorship. While I appreciate Bart Ehrman's argument and see its power, I also sense power in Elder Maxwell's words:

We are "looking beyond the mark" (Jacob 4:14), therefore, when, figuratively speaking, we are more interested in the physical dimensions of the cross than what was achieved thereon by Jesus. Or when we neglect Alma's words on faith because we are too fascinated by the light-shielding hat reportedly used by Joseph Smith during some of the translating of the Book of Mormon.<sup>27</sup>

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Christ will come and with its coming the rebellion will collapse." F.F. Bruce, [World Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Thessalonians Volume 45](#), Zondervan, 2017, p. 51/373 epub electronic edition.

<sup>24</sup> Even scholars who affirm Pauline authorship note that the difference in eschatological outlook is one of the fundamental reasons why the common authorship of the two letters is refuted. Thus Williams states, '[t]hose doubting that Paul wrote it claim that the eschatology of 2 Thessalonians differs from that of 1 Thessalonians to the point of contradiction' D.J. Williams, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Bart Ehrman, [Forged: Writing in the Name of God - Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are](#), Harper One, 2011, p. 120-122.

<sup>26</sup> See: F.F. Bruce, p. 55 for his presentation of Schmithals' argument regarding four letters to the Thessalonians.

<sup>27</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, The Book of Mormon: A Great Answer to "The Great Question," Address at the Book of Mormon Symposium at Brigham Young University on October 10, 1986, published in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2003), p. 1-18.

## II. Thanksgiving and Encouragement amidst Persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12)

A. Commendation of the Thessalonians' growing faith and perseverance (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)

B. Assurance of God's righteous judgment and justice against persecutors (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10)

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When 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 (2 Thes. 7-10).

The righteous can take solace in the knowledge that the wicked will receive their just reward for their actions. Apart from facing their deserved "destruction," they will also be excluded from the presence of the Lord. However, Joseph Smith received divine revelation affirming that after the wicked have been duly punished and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Savior, they will have the opportunity to attain a kingdom of glory (D&C 76.109–112). At the Second Coming, when Jesus is glorified, both the righteous believers who have passed away and those still living on earth will contribute to His glory. It is through the eternal life of God's saints that His work and glory are manifested, for this is what he desires to accomplish, the glorification of his children (Moses 1.39).

C. Encouragement of believers to endure and be counted worthy of God's kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

## III. Clarification of Misunderstandings about the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17)

A. Addressing confusion and false teachings regarding the coming of the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

B. Reminding the Thessalonians of previous instructions concerning the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5)

Let 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 (2 Thes. 2.3 KJV).

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thes. 2.3 RSV).

let not any one deceive you in any manner, because -- if the falling away may not come first, and the man of sin be revealed -- the son of the destruction (2 Thes. 2.3 YLT).

This passage provides the clearest prophecy of a Christian apostasy within the New Testament (also referenced in Acts 20.29 with the mention of "grievous wolves entering in among you"). The Greek term for "falling away/apostasíai (ἀποστασία) carries a strong meaning and is translated as "rebellion" (RSV, NIV), or "revolt" (JB). This apostasy was not a passive movement; rather, it was a deliberate defection or desertion intended to oppose authority, orchestrated by the devil. The devil is also referred to as "that man of sin" (KJV), "the man of lawlessness" (NIV, NAS, RSV), or "wickedness" (NEB). In this verse, "the son of perdition" refers to Satan, with "perdition" in Latin meaning destruction. It is important to remember that this is only Paul's second letter, and the apostasy was already gaining ground within two

decades of Jesus' ministry, resurrection, and post-resurrection ministry. It was neither a passive nor a gradual occurrence. Jesus had foretold it, as did Paul (Matthew 24:24). Satan and his minions actively engage in their counterfeiting endeavors.

Joseph Smith taught:

“Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians gives utterance to a prophecy which covers the whole ground of the absolute and universal apostasy of Christendom. A prophecy which, if the apostasy of so-called Christendom has not been complete and universal, proves beyond all question that the great Apostle of the Gentiles is a false prophet; or if fulfilled, then it proves that the Church of Christ, so far as it existed in the earth was to be destroyed; that another and different religion was to be substituted for the Christian religion: that another church, one founded by men, was to take the place of the Church of Christ, a worldly church dominated by the very spirit of Lucifer, who, under its rule, would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God; and sit in the temple of God showing himself, so far as this world is concerned, that he is God. Moreover Paul declared in this very prophecy I am about to quote that the forces which would ultimately bring to pass this universal apostasy from the Christian religion-'the mystery of iniquity'-was already at work even in his day.”<sup>28</sup>

Ezra Taft Benson explained this situation in this manner:

“With the passing of the Apostles and the loss of the priesthood keys, corrupt doctrines were introduced into the Church. In the words of one eminent historian, 'Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated [new] life in the theology and liturgy of the Church.' (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 3:595.) By the second and third centuries, widespread changes had been made in the pure doctrines and ordinances given by the Savior. The Church that Jesus had established and sanctioned was no longer on this earth.”<sup>29</sup>

ἀποκαλυφθῆ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας “That man of sin **be revealed**, the son of **perdition**” (2 Thes. 2.3).

Kent Jackson taught:

“The 'man of sin,' generally equated with Satan, would exalt himself over all that is divine and assume the place of God in the Church. Of historical and theological significance is the fact that in Paul's prophecy the church structure survives. But God is not at its head, making that church-following the appearance in it of Satan-no longer the church of God.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1:xcii.

<sup>29</sup> *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Bookcraft, 1988, p. 86.

<sup>30</sup> Kent P. Jackson, “*Early Signs of the Apostasy*,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1984. Brother Jackson continues, “To say that Satan sits in the place of God in Christianity after the time of the Apostles is not to say that all that is in it is satanic. Indeed, Latter-day Saints should rejoice—as the heavens undoubtedly do—at the great works of righteousness and faith, and the leavening influence on the world, of those whose lives are touched in any degree by Him whose gospel the Saints enjoy in its fulness.”



C. Providing further insight into the events preceding Christ's return and the revelation of the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12)

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie (2 These. 2.10-11).

In the Old Testament, God often punished people by giving them the very blindness they had chosen for themselves (Is 19:14; 29:9-10);<sup>31</sup> in Jewish tradition, all the nations chose to turn away from God's truth, and only Israel accepted his law. Satan's primary roles in Jewish thought were accuser and deceiver or tempter; for Antiochus Epiphanes's deceit, see Daniel 8:25; for that of idolatry in general, see Isaiah 44:20 and Jeremiah 10:3-5. Philosophers characterized themselves as lovers of truth, and this characterization was accepted as a morally high ideal among the leisured class of Paul's day and probably among others who stopped to listen to public lectures. But Paul, like most Jewish people, believed that God's perfect truth came by revelation, not by humans' finite reasonings.<sup>32</sup>

D. Exhortation to stand firm in the truth and hold fast to the teachings received (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

But 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 (2 Thes. 2.13).

In the Old Testament, God demonstrated His choice of Israel as His people. In the New Testament, Gentile believers who are included among His people are often referred to as "chosen." This designation is given to those who have embraced the truth and have faith in the Spirit. However, it is important to note that not all translations convey this message clearly, such as the KJV. Some interpretations of this verse are influenced by Protestant theology, suggesting that God's election is based on unconditional salvation.<sup>33</sup>

#### **IV. Practical Exhortations for the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 3:1-18)**

A. Request for prayer and support in spreading the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

B. Warning against idleness and disorderliness within the community (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)

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<sup>31</sup> See also [Alma 29.1-4](#) where Alma declares that God "alloteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction."

<sup>32</sup> Keener, *Background*, p. 597-598.

<sup>33</sup> The Westminster Confession writings on election, which taught that God chooses to save only certain mortals: "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto." [Westminster Confession 3.6](#). Again in [chapter 10](#) we read: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death . . . this effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit."

“Neither 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” (2 Thes. 3.8).

To illustrate this point, Paul serves as an example. During his time in Thessalonica, he worked to earn his own wages. It is known from other passages that Paul practiced the trade of tent making or leatherworking (Acts 18.1–3; 2 Corinthians 11/9). In this context, Paul employs a Semitic idiom, where “to eat someone’s bread” signifies earning a livelihood (see Genesis 3.19; 2 Kings 9.7). By highlighting this idiom, the verse helps clarify that the issue at hand was primarily related to idleness rather than disorderliness.

“busybodies” (2 Thes. 3.11).<sup>34</sup>

“Busybodies” could refer to those engaged in superfluous activity, wasting their time on irrelevant details, or to troublesome “meddlers,” or to both. Some Christians may have decided to justify their idleness by citing the lifestyle of traveling sages, such as Paul and his companions. But although Paul and his companions had distinguished themselves from the “bad” Cynic philosophers, some Thessalonians may have continued fully in the Cynic vein: unlike Paul, Cynics begged rather than worked; and with their denunciations of passersby they were certainly “meddlers.” Alternatively, they may have followed other models for idleness. The origin of this group of idlers in the church might be the Greco-Roman aristocratic disdain for manual labor, or clients or parasites dependent on wealthier patrons, or a mistaken belief that the day of the Lord had come and canceled the need for such labor (2:2).<sup>35</sup>

“Be not weary in well doing” (2 Thes. 3.13).

Elder Maxwell once wrote:

Once we align ourselves with God's purposes, then routine and the ordinary play their part, as John M. Synge said: 'When men lose their poetic feeling for ordinary life, and cannot write of ordinary things, their exalted poetry is likely to lose its strength of exaltation in the way men cease to build beautiful churches when they have lost happiness in building shops.' Instead, disciples can have enough confidence in His cause so that most causes of weariness can be avoided and the unavoidable weariness can be absorbed.<sup>36</sup>

Mircea Eliade wrote:

By assuming the responsibility of creating the world that he (the religious man) has chosen to inhabit, he not only cosmicizes chaos but also sanctifies his little cosmos by making it like the world of the gods. Religious man’s profound nostalgia is to inhabit a “divine world,” is his desire that his house shall be like the house of the gods, as it was later represented in temples and sanctuaries. In short, this religious nostalgia expresses the desire to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator’s hands. The experience

<sup>34</sup> ἀκούομεν γὰρ τινὰς περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους· “For we hear that some going among you *who* are **being disruptive, not doing any work**, but **meddling in other people’s business**” (2 Thes. 3.11, my translation).

<sup>35</sup> Keener, *Background*, p. 598.

<sup>36</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *We Will Prove Them Herewith*, Deseret Book, 1982, p. 113.

of sacred time will make it possible for religious man periodically to experience the cosmos as it was in principio, that is, at the mythical moment of Creation.

C. Instruction to withdraw from disobedient brothers and sisters while maintaining love and correction (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

D. Final words of encouragement, prayer, and blessing (2 Thessalonians 3:16-18)