

## 2 Thessalonians

**1:1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the gathering of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> **1:2** Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

**1:3** We are obligated always to thank God for you, brothers, as it is appropriate under the circumstances, because your belief is growing abundantly and the love of each one of you towards one another is increasing,<sup>3</sup> **1:4** so that, in the gatherings of God, we ourselves brag about you—your steadfastness and your belief in the midst of all your persecutions and the afflictions which you are enduring.<sup>4</sup>

**1:5** This will lead to a clear demonstration of God's perfectly correct judgment with the added purpose that you be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering,<sup>5</sup> **1:6** because it is indeed justifiable for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,<sup>6</sup> **1:7** and to repay with relief you who are being afflicted, along with us, in the revealing of the Lord Jesus from heaven, along with His *angeloi* of power<sup>7</sup> **1:8** in the midst of flaming fire, as He metes out justice towards those who do not know God and who do not obey the good news regarding our Lord Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

**1:9** They will undergo the rightful payment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,<sup>9</sup> **1:10** when he comes in that day to be glorified among those of his who are holy and to be admired by all who believe, because our testimony to you was believed.<sup>10</sup> **1:11** To this end also we always pray for you, that our God will consider you worthy of your calling and will bring to completion every desire for goodness and every work of belief by means of His power,<sup>11</sup> **1:12** so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you will be glorified in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>12</sup>

**2:1** We ask you, brothers, in regard to the grand appearance of our Lord Jesus the Messiah and our being gathered to him,<sup>13</sup> **2:2** that you not be quickly shaken from your mind and become too excited, whether by a spirit, a message, or a letter, as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has begun to occur.<sup>14</sup> **2:3** Let no one in any way deceive you, because it does not begin to occur unless the rebellion comes first and the Man of Lawlessness, the Son of Destruction, is revealed,<sup>15</sup> **2:4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so as to sit in the temple of God by proclaiming that he himself is God.<sup>16</sup>

**2:5** Do you not remember that, when I was still with you, I was saying these things to you?<sup>17</sup> **2:6** Indeed, you know what now restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his own time.<sup>18</sup> **2:7** The mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only, the One who restrains him will do so until He is out of the middle.<sup>19</sup> **2:8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by the breath/spirit of his mouth and will bring to an end at the manifestation of his grand appearance.<sup>20</sup>

**2:9** The lawless one's grand appearance is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and false wonders,<sup>21</sup> **2:10** and with all deception of immorality for those who are destroyed in return for their not embracing the love of the truth in order that they may be saved.<sup>22</sup> **2:11** On account of this, God is sending to them an energy of deception, so

that they believe what is false,<sup>23</sup> 2:12 so that they all may be condemned, who do not believe the truth but instead take pleasure in evil.<sup>24</sup>

2:13 We are obligated to thank God always for you, brothers, who are loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation in the holiness of the Spirit and your belief in the truth,<sup>25</sup> 2:14 to which He called you through our good news, in order to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.<sup>26</sup>

2:15 Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold on to the content of the teachings that have been handed down, which you were taught, whether by spoken word or by our letter.<sup>27</sup>

2:16 May our Lord Jesus the Messiah himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal persuasion and good hope by His grace,<sup>28</sup> 2:17 convince your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and spoken word.<sup>29</sup>

3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the message of the Lord progresses rapidly and is glorified, as it also is for you,<sup>30</sup> 3:2 and that we may be rescued from absurd and evil men, for not all have belief.<sup>31</sup>

3:3 However, the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.<sup>32</sup> 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, because the things which we are commanding you, you both are doing them and will do them.<sup>33</sup> 3:5 May the Lord guide your hearts towards love for God and perseverance in the Messiah.<sup>34</sup>

3:6 We command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, that you keep away from every brother who behaves irresponsibly and not according to the content of instruction that has been handed down, which you received from us.<sup>35</sup> 3:7 You yourselves know how it is necessary to follow our example, because we did not behave irresponsibly towards you.<sup>36</sup> 3:8 We did not eat anyone's bread as a gift, but, with labor and toil, we were working night and day, so as not to be a financial burden to any of you,<sup>37</sup> 3:9 not because we do not have this right, but so that we could present ourselves as an example to you for you to imitate us.<sup>38</sup>

3:10 Indeed, when we were with you, we kept commanding you this, that if someone is not willing to work, then let him not eat.<sup>39</sup> 3:11 For we hear of some among you who are behaving irresponsibly and not working, but are acting as though they deserve to be supported for their work among you.<sup>40</sup> 3:12 To such as these, we give the commandment and we encourage in the Lord Jesus the Messiah, that they work without saying anything and eat their own bread.<sup>41</sup>

3:13 Brothers, do not lose your enthusiasm for doing good.<sup>42</sup> 3:14 Yet, if someone does not obey our message through this letter, take note of this person and do not get tangled up with him, so that he may learn to respect it.<sup>43</sup> 3:15 However, do not consider him an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.<sup>44</sup>

3:16 May the Lord of shalom grant you shalom through everything because of all your behavior. The Lord be with you all.<sup>45</sup>

3:17 A greeting with my hand, that of Paul, is a distinguishing mark in every letter. Thus I write,<sup>46</sup> 3:18 "The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with you all."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ – The authors of this letter are the same as those of 1 Thessalonians. Just as the first letter was written from Corinth around A.D. 52 during Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> major trip, this one was written from the same location a little time afterwards during the same trip. The greeting is very similar, where Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy declare that the Thessalonian Christians are located spiritually, intellectually, and morally in God and Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ὁ[μήμων] καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The two commodities which are absolutely necessary from God for a morally depraved human being to reach the ultimate goal of eternal life and moral perfection are His sovereign and independent grace that changes a person’s inwardness and causes him to be an authentic and enduring believer in the apostolic and biblical message along with God’s promise of an eternal existence in the Kingdom of God where life will be completely pain and suffering free among other human beings who are all morally perfect.

<sup>3</sup> Εὐχαριστεῖν ὀφείλομεν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί, καθὼς ἄξιόν ἐστιν, ὅτι ὑπεραυξάνει ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καὶ πλεονάζει ἡ ἀγάπη ἐνὸς ἐκάστου πάντων ὑμῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους – Looking at the story of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-9 and their first letter to the Thessalonian Christians, which they wrote also from Corinth shortly before this one, the believers in that city have been under a lot of pressure and experiencing a great deal of persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, it is no surprise that these men feel compelled, “under the circumstances,” to thank God for the enduring belief of the Thessalonian Christians. It is only because of God’s grace that they still are Christians, because these authors recognize that mere human inner fortitude is completely insufficient to cause morally depraved human beings to continue to believe the biblical message when they are under such intense pressure, both from within and from without.

Indeed, Paul understands that the Thessalonians’ belief in God and love for one another is growing, that their understanding of God’s truth is increasing as they presumed to continue to review over and over that which Paul and his co-workers had taught them, which is leading to their appreciating each other for the support which they are able to give one another under such difficult circumstances.

<sup>4</sup> ὥστε αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἔγκαυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς ὑμῶν καὶ πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς διωγμοῖς ὑμῶν καὶ ταῖς θλίψεσιν αἷς ἀνέχεσθε – The result of what God is miraculously doing in the Thessalonians’ lives is that Paul can genuinely brag, i.e., give God all the credit, in Corinth for the endurance of their belief, when, from a human standpoint, it makes sense that they would have given up on God and Christianity long ago. But this is one of the most important aspects of Christians who are truly authentic in their belief, that through God’s protective grace and power they can hold on to the value of the promise of God’s mercy and eternal life under even the most extreme and difficult circumstances. This is Paul’s important point in Romans 5:3-5, “**5:3** Not only this, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces perseverance, **5:4** and perseverance produces clear evidence, and clear evidence produces waiting confidently. **5:5** And waiting confidently will not result in being ashamed, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

<sup>5</sup> ἔνδειγμα τῆς δικαίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ καταξιοθῆναι ὑμᾶς τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ πάσχετε – Paul views both the persecution of the Thessalonian Christians by hostile unbelievers and their enduring belief as that which will theologially lead to the time when God will clearly demonstrate His perfect and correct judgment of all human beings. And he declares to the Thessalonians for their encouragement that the purpose of their suffering at the hands of others and their belief in God has an eternal purpose—that they may be considered fit and qualified for entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

Thus, God has promised to save from condemnation those whom He has chosen and to condemn and destroy those whom He has not. In the case the former, God causes those whom He has chosen to persevere in their belief, especially in the face of circumstances which naturally could crush people’s belief, because enduring belief through suffering is what God has laid down as the necessary human requirement for eternal salvation and life. In the case of the latter group of people, God causes those whom He has not chosen to rebel against Him throughout their entire lives and even persecute those whom He has chosen. Both kinds of people are part of God’s story which He is telling through the creation.

Paul also points out that the Thessalonians would not be experiencing such hardship in their lives *if they were not Christians*. Thus, their suffering is for the purpose of giving God the opportunity to exhibit His just nature in conformance with His promises towards those whom He has chosen and towards those whom He has not chosen.

Paul’s use of the concept of worthy does not mean that people actually earn God’s eternal mercy. Here, worthy has only the sense of people doing that which qualifies them for God’s salvation because of God’s grace.

The Kingdom of God is God’s end-game for the entire creation, a future realm in which Jesus of Nazareth will rule and govern not only as God’s proxy, like David or Solomon, but also as the icon of God within the creation, i.e., God manifesting Himself in the creation as a human being. There will be two stages to this kingdom. The first is the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, and the second is the new earth of Revelation 21.

cf. 2 Peter 3:8,9 – “**3:8** But do not let this one thing escape you, beloved, that one day for the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. **3:9** The Lord of promise is not “delaying” as some think of delay, but He is being patient toward you. He does not desire some of you to be destroyed but for all to make progress in repentance.” Peter

expresses the same concept of God's patiently waiting for unbelievers to change their minds and be saved while also causing authentic believers to endure difficult times in order that they may develop even more mature belief and become clearly more steadfast in their inner commitment to the biblical truth and to God.

<sup>6</sup> εἴπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῶ ἀνταποδοῦναι τοῖς θλιβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλίψιν – God's very nature of being a just and righteous God requires that people who rebel against Him their entire lives receive the consequence (that which they earn and deserve) of their rebellion, the "affliction" (θλίψιν) of eternal destruction (cf. v 9, 2 Peter 3, and Revelation 20). Therefore, it is not only right that God fulfills His promise of eternal life to those whom He has chosen, such as the Thessalonian believers. It is also right that He exercises His justice and condemnation towards those who rebel against Him all their lives. Thus, He "repays" each kind of person according to their spiritual orientation.

<sup>7</sup> καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἄνεσιν μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ – Three options for "his angels of power" – 1) God's conventional angels who accompany Jesus from "heaven" and help destroy the Man of Lawlessness and his army on the land of Israel; 2) human beings who were believers in history and have either died and been resurrected or are alive and raised off the earth to meet Jesus when He returns and who fight with Jesus against the Man of Lawlessness and his army and destroy them, thus being Jesus' "angels"; 3) God's manifestations of Himself as in the OT, including Jesus who is the icon of God, and that demonstrate the transcendent power of God to destroy His enemies and bring about His kingdom with Jesus as its king. This is like the message of the Mosaic Covenant dramatically communicated in the midst of the various and multiple theophanies of thunder, lightning, thick cloud, and a loud trumpet sound, i.e., the manifestation of Yahweh as the transcendent Creator using natural, created elements that were familiar to the Israelites (cf. Exodus 19:16). Therefore, #3. This is in line with Stephen's description of God's aid to Moses as a leader of Israel in Acts 7:35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help [lit. hand] of the angel [God's theophany and therefore God] who appeared to him in the thorn bush."

Likewise, Acts 7:53 "you who received the law as ordained by angels (εἰς διαταγὰς (διατάσσω) ἀγγέλων), and yet did not keep it."

Gal. 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels (διαταγεῖς (διατάσσω) δι' ἀγγέλων) by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

cf. Acts 13:48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life (ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι (τάσσω) εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) believed.

Hebrews 2:2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

Genesis 16:7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." 9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority." 10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

Genesis 21:17 God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

Genesis 22:15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

Genesis 24:7 "The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.

Genesis 31:11 "Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'

Exodus 3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

Exodus 14:19 The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

Numbers 22:31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

Judges 2:1 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, [many times in the book of Judges]

Judges 6:22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

Option #3 seems the best. That just as God Himself appeared to and was present with the Israelites during their journey through the wilderness, and just as He appeared to Moses and them on Mt. Sinai with powerful displays of His might, God will manifest Himself through Jesus and the power He gives him to destroy the enemies of Israel when Jesus returns. Thus, these are God's angels, not Jesus', i.e., His powerful angeloi, not his powerful angeloi.

God's just nature also requires that those whom He has chosen and who display genuine belief in the present realm due to His inner work receive the "consequence" and "compensation" (that which is given strictly by grace) of their

authentic belief—rest and relief from the hard work of enduring in their belief through being harassed and attacked by unbelievers. These true believers will accompany the apostles and apostolic workers such as Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy past the final judgment into eternal life when Jesus returns as the Messiah along with God’s “*angeli*” who are God Himself in various ways with Jesus who are all destroying God’s enemies.

Paul does not make it clear to his readers exactly who are these *angeli*. As according to option #3 above, these are like the smoking oven and the flaming torch of Genesis 15. They will be multiple manifestations of Yahweh to aid the Messiah in his disposing of his enemies on earth when he returns. But if this is compared with Matthew 24:31,36 – “31 And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other...36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone,” then Paul here in 2 Thessalonians is talking about something different from what Jesus is talking about in the Olivet Discourse. Jesus speaks of conventional angels whose responsibility at the end of the present time before the millennial kingdom will be to help gather believers, both dead and alive, and then at the end of the millennial kingdom to help gather unbelievers, both dead and alive (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4; Revelation 19,20). Or it could be that Jesus is speaking of multiple manifestations or effects of God and His Spirit to resurrect dead believers and raise living believers from the earth to meet Jesus when he returns.

<sup>8</sup> ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, ἡ δίδοντας ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ἑυαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ – Psalm 104:4 He makes the winds His messengers (אֲנַחְשָׁיִם וְרוּחָיו) (ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα), flaming fire His ministers (אֲנַחְשָׁיִם וְרוּחָיו) (οὐς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον).

Revelation 1:14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire (οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόξ πυρός).

Revelation 2:18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire (ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρός), and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire (οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόξ πυρός), and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Therefore, “in the midst of flaming fire” refers to God’s actions of judgment and destruction of those who oppose Him, both the Man of Lawlessness and his army on the land of Israel and all unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment. Even the former will take place with “fire” as stated in the OT by Isaiah 66:15 For behold, the LORD will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire (ἐν φλογὶ πυρός). 16 For the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the LORD will be many.

This is similar to Isaiah 26:11 O LORD, Your hand is lifted up yet they do not see it. They see Your zeal for the people and are put to shame. Indeed, fire will devour Your enemies.

And it seems best to interpret both Isaiah 26 and Isaiah 66 as referring to the millennial kingdom and its inception. Jesus as one of God’s powerful “*angeli*” will produce a destroying effect like that of fire on the earth when they all exercise God’s justice and destroy those who have refused to recognize God as their transcendent Creator and Ruler, mostly by having rejected Jesus as the Messiah and God’s central figure within the creation. Putting together the data from books such as Joel (and other OT prophets) and Revelation, the immediate enemies of God when Jesus returns will be the Man of Lawlessness (still to be discussed in 2 Thessalonians 2) and his army who invade Israel and create a massive amount of havoc among the Jews living on their land given them by God. Jesus with the rest of God’s manifestations of His judging and destructive power will destroy this man and the army.

But Paul could also be including, while not providing all the details of, the final Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20 where unbelievers will experience measured punishment and eternal destruction from God. This is clear from v. 9, that Jesus’ enemies whom he destroys when he returns, both Jews and Gentiles, will also experience the second resurrection of Revelation 20 and its Great White Throne Judgment. In other words, Paul could very well be focused on Jesus’ return and God’s judgment even through fire of His enemies, but eventually complete destruction for them occurs at the end of the millennial kingdom. Thus, God will judge and destroy all those who have rejected Him and His Messiah, Jesus.

But Paul is referring specifically to those in NT times, like the people in Thessalonica who are persecuting his readers, who have rejected the message of Jesus as Messiah, King, and Priest who is willing to intercede on their behalf.

<sup>9</sup> οἵτινες δίκην τίσουσιν ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ – The end effect of Jesus’ and the *angeli*’s destruction of God’s and his enemies, who have invaded Israel and who are unbelievers their whole lives, will be eternal. This awesome display of power by Jesus will be on the basis of his role as the Son of God and ruler within the creation, because he is God’s proxy according to the Davidic Covenant.

These people who receive God’s justice will miss out on being in Jesus’ presence for all eternity, which itself will be an environment of a powerful kind that constantly produces an awe-inspiring effect in his subjects because of just how wonderful it will be.

<sup>10</sup> ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ῥιστεύουσιν, ὅτι ἔπιστεύθη τὸ μαρτύριον ἡμῶν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ – Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in his first letter that believers who have died before Jesus' return will be raised from the dead, and believers who are still alive will rise up from the earth to meet Jesus above it (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). He also wrote that no one knows the exact day in which this will happen. Here, Paul is saying that the emotional and intellectual response of believers to Jesus' appearance will be one of awe, because they will express a sense of wonder, admiration, and excitement at seeing him in the midst of their being resurrected from the dead or lifted off the earth and acquiring their immortal bodies.

Paul also says that this will happen because people will have believed what he and his co-workers have been communicating about Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. It is this effect that will become clear at Jesus' return when only believers are raised or lifted to meet him in the air.

<sup>11</sup> Εἰς ὃ καὶ προσευχόμεθα πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ῥηλώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει – On the basis of the Thessalonian Christians' belief in the message that Paul proclaimed to them, he prays for their eternal salvation, that they will endure in their belief so that God will view them as those who have qualified for His eternal mercy and life. This prayer on their behalf by Paul includes that God will powerfully finish the work that He has begun in them through His Holy Spirit. This will involve two elements. The first is that God will bring all the desires that these Thessalonian Christians have for biblical morality to a point of completion by granting them moral perfection in eternal life when they are either resurrected from death or lifted off the earth when Jesus returns. The second is that God will bring all the actions grounded in authentic belief to a point of completion by granting them eternal life and moral perfect bodies. And both of these elements will exist for the Thessalonian Christians by virtue of God's powerfully working within them to cause them to persevere in their faith and biblical inwardness.

<sup>12</sup> ὅπως ἐνδοξασθῇ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ᾧ ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν αὐτῷ, κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The end goal of God's work in the Thessalonians at the reappearance of the Messiah is that Jesus and his role as the King and High Priest will find a genuine element of being declared magnificent by the Thessalonians, and the Thessalonians will find the same kind of element of being declared magnificent by God—the latter as revealed by their being transformed into morally perfect beings in accord with Jesus' own immortal body. Paul indicates that this will all occur by virtue of God's sovereign, independent, and loving action towards them, which found its expression through Jesus' willingness to suffer and die for them.

The "name" of Jesus refers to all for which he stands. He is God's icon in the creation. He is the king of God's creation, especially of the eternal creation of the next realm. He is the high priest who mediates on behalf of morally depraved human beings. He is the general who leads God's armies against His and the Jews' enemies on earth and destroys them.

<sup>13</sup> Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ' αὐτὸν – In keeping with Paul's thinking in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 that, whether Christians die and are resurrected when Jesus visits the earth and makes his grand appearance as the king of Israel and the world (παρουσία) or they are alive when Jesus returns and, therefore, raised up off the earth, both groups will meet him at this time in human history. Thus, they encourage the Thessalonian Christians to hold on to the truth until this happens.

**1 Thessalonians 4:15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming [grand appearance, visitation, παρουσία] of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

<sup>14</sup> εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς ῥηδὲ θροεῖσθαι, μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου – Two options for what Paul means by ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου, 1) that Jesus has returned and these Thessalonian Christians believe that they missed out for some unknown reason on acquiring eternal life, or 2) that Jesus' return is so imminent and has begun to occur that these Thessalonian Christians have stopped living life the way they should, i.e., responsibly and maybe even morally.

If #1, then being "quickly shaken from your mind" and "alarmed" would be appropriate translations, meaning that these Christians have adopted a different intellectual understanding from what Paul had initially taught them to the effect that the time between Jesus' first and second appearances will be a long one and they have now become afraid they have "lost" their salvation. If #2, then being "quickly shaken from your mind" and "stirred up" or "inwardly excited" or "too excited" would be the right translations, meaning that these Christians have adopted a different intellectual understanding from what Paul had initially taught them to the effect that the time between Jesus' first and second appearances will be a long one and they have become so excited that Jesus is about to return that their emotions have made them act in an irresponsible way, similar to what Paul has to say to this same community of believers in **1 Thessalonians 5:14** We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

We know that some of the Thessalonian Christians are already prone to laziness and irresponsibility, which is what Paul will address in this letter in chapter 3 – **2 Thessalonians 3:6** "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us... **11** For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. **12** Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread." This is similar to what Paul wrote in **1 Thessalonians 4:10-12** "But we urge you,

brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.”

It would obviously shake the Thessalonian Christians to their core if Jesus returned *and they did not rise from the earth to meet him*. It would mean that God had not considered them authentic believers and “worthy” of the “consequence” of His grace and eternal mercy. Supposedly, there were people pretending to be Paul and his companions who could or even had already written a letter to the Thessalonians declaring that they had missed Jesus’ return (as if he had, too?). This return Paul is calling “the Day of the Lord” (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1,2 – 5:1 Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you do not need for us to write to you, 5:2 because you yourselves correctly know that the Day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night [subjectively for those who are unwilling to recognize the obvious signs]. Cf. Joel 2:31 – The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes). The “Day of the Lord” refers to the events whereby God doles out His anger and justice on people who deserve it, starting with the Jews, resulting in their eventual disappearance from existence at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. Cf. Isaiah 13 where God calls the “Day of the Lord” the end of the Babylonian Empire when it was conquered by the Medes in 539 B.C.

But it makes more sense in the context of chapter 3 that the problem is #2, that these Christians have become so excited that Jesus is about to return that they have stopped living life responsibly with regard to their making a living for themselves. They have become busybodies, relying on others for their needs, and simply waiting around for Jesus to return.

ἐνίστημι – 1. To take place as an event, be here, be at hand, arrive, come; 2) to be present as condition or thing at the time of speaking, be now, happen now; 3) to be about to occur, w. connotation of threatening, be imminent, be impending. It is the last meaning that makes the most sense here.

**Galatians 1:4** “who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age (ἐκ τοῦ ‘αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος’), according to the will of our God and Father.” Here, #2 makes the most sense.

**2 Timothy 3:1** “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come (ἐνστήσονται).” The future tense is helpful, indicating #1.

<sup>15</sup> Μή τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον. ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἁνομιᾶς, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας – As if the Thessalonians are not experiencing enough of mankind’s rebellion against God by suffering great persecution, Paul says that the way that they will be able to recognize that Jesus’ return is imminent and about to occur is by “the rebellion” arising. In addition, there will be one person, the Man of Lawlessness, who will become well-known for how he positions himself within humanity. He is the Man of Lawlessness because he is purely evil and opposed to all biblical morality, whether it is defined in the moral commandments inside the Mosaic Covenant or outside it in the rest of the Bible. Paul also calls him the Son of Destruction, because he represents everything that is opposed to God and that results in people being destroyed when God executes His justice and condemnation towards them. He will also seek to destroy the people of God, the Jews, and followers of Jesus (cf. Revelation 13,16-18). Thus, he is destruction in every sense of the word—causing it and resulting in it for those who follow him.

This is probably the same man as Gog who comes from Magog in Ezekiel 38 & 39. God raises him up and drags him and his army into Israel only to glorify Himself by destroying them all.

cf. Joshua 22:22, “The God of gods, Yahweh, the God of gods, Yahweh, He knows. And Israel will know. If it was in rebellion (מַרְדּוּת־בְּיָהוָה) (ἐἰ ἐν ἀποστασίᾳ), or if it was in rebellion (לְעַבְדּוֹת־אֲחֵרִים) against Yahweh, then do not save us this day.”

cf. John 17:12, “While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given me. And not one of them experienced destruction except the son of destruction (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας), in order that the scripture would be fulfilled.”

<sup>16</sup> ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρούμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενος θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἵκαθίσει ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός – The rebellion will become obvious as demonstrated by one person who not only “sits in the temple of God,” but also claims to be God. His sitting in the temple of God is more likely metaphorical considering that the temple may not be rebuilt until after Jesus’ return. Therefore, Paul is using an idiomatic expression to say that this man will definitely consider himself so great that everyone should basically worship him and follow him and his leadership. And there will be such a large group of people, even Jews, who do this that he is able to raise an army and invade Israel—only to be destroyed by God at Jesus’ return.

Hard to see this happening in this secular and atheistic world, or at least in a world where religions either shun the very idea of a transcendent Creator or make false claims about the Creator God. Therefore, if it happens in our time, this man will claim phenomenal grandeur as his nature and right. Grandiosity at its maximum. Perhaps he comes from another religion and yet claims some sort of God status—like a great prophet and spokesman for God.

Considering all the information in the book of Daniel, the rebellion and the Man of Lawlessness will be centered in the Middle East, most likely arising somehow out of the Islamic environment that exists there currently. He will be very much like Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king who set up a statue of Zeus in the Jewish temple in December, 168 B.C., but his antipathy towards God and the Jews will go way beyond that of Antiochus.

<sup>17</sup> Οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἔτι ᾤον πρός ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν – Paul now switches to the first person singular to allow the focus to be more on himself as the actual apostle, who is being accompanied by his traveling companions

who are his apostolic co-workers. Paul reminds his readers that he authoritatively taught them all these things when he first passed through Thessalonica from Philippi to Berea a relatively short time before (perhaps a year and a half). Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians approximately one year after having been in that city. Because the co-authors of this letter are listed as the same as those of 1 Thessalonians, perhaps he wrote this letter fairly soon afterwards, even while still in Corinth during the 18 months that they spent there (cf. Acts 18). It may, indeed, make sense that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy decided to write this particular letter just before they left Corinth and headed to Jerusalem, thinking that one more piece of encouragement would be handy before they travel so far away, especially in the light of the Thessalonians' misunderstanding the timing and signs of the parousia of Jesus.

<sup>18</sup> καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχων οἴδατε εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ῥέαντοῦ καιρῷ – Taking the neuter τὸ κατέχων with the masculine ὁ κατέχων, the only interpretation that makes sense in terms of both what and who is restraining the rebellion against God from occurring is God Himself and His patience towards the Jews, granting them more time to repent of their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and gain His eternal mercy and life. This is what the “time and times and half a time” in Revelation 12:14 mean where Israel is scattered and protected by God from Satan’s destroying them between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings of Jesus. Therefore, when God is ready after His patience has run out, and “in [the son of lawlessness’] own time”, i.e., when it is divinely appropriate, the rebellion and this man will appear in history to bring about the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord and God’s final judgment on the Jews before Jesus parousia and grand appearance as King of Savior of Israel.

<sup>19</sup> τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἧδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται – “Mystery” in the NT is a tricky word. It does not refer to something that is irrational. It simply would not make sense for it to do so, because God, His truth, and even the ability for human beings to be able to know truthful ideas about Him are all clearly portrayed in the Bible as rational. Instead, it makes more sense that “mystery” refers to something or someone that has not yet been physically revealed within God’s story or that people are not willing to embrace even while the evidence is clear and right in front of them. Thus, once either God writes it into the story or people willingly face into the truth, then it is no longer a “mystery.” In line with this, in the context of “in accord with the activity of Satan,” it also refers to his secret agenda to destroy the Jews and God’s plans for them that include the Messiah. So Satan has enlisted a cadre of followers that is not small but extends throughout the world, powerful men and women, both in high positions and in low positions of society, whether financially and/or politically, down through human history who have been willing to pursue his agenda with him, even if they are consciously unaware of their following him. Thus, their rebellion against God extends beyond their plain, ordinary, daily sin as they embrace Satan’s lies and deceptions wholeheartedly for the purpose of his goals of destroying both the Jews as a social nation and genuine believers of both Jewish and Gentile descent. Cf. Revelation 12.

Thus, because this one person, the “Son of Destruction,” will be revealed by God, Paul can call him and his profound evil of wanting to destroy the Jews a mystery, i.e., a secret that is not completely obvious, and say that it is already at work. In other words, the ultimate human evil and rebellion against God that this person will demonstrate, especially by working to destroy God’s chosen people, both the Jews and all believers in Jesus, is already present to some degree in the world. And this mystery of evil will continue until Jesus returns. In addition, people are willingly buying into the lies of Satan and being deceived by him. So just as there will be a “beast” empowered by Satan at the end of God’s judgment of the Jews (cf. Revelation 13), there are beasts now who are oppressing Jews and Christians (cf. Revelation 12). This means that we can look at events in history such as the Assyrian and Babylonian destructions of the two kingdoms of Jews midway or so through the millennium before Jesus, the Inquisition in the Middle Ages, the Holocaust in Europe during World War II, the persecution and execution of Christians in various parts of the world over the last two thousand years, etc. as the “mystery of lawlessness” that is “already at work.” But there will be a final push by Satan to destroy God’s people, and it will look almost as though he is going to succeed, and then Jesus with God’s “mighty *angeli* in flaming fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8) will appear and destroy the Man of Lawlessness and his armies.

Paul also says that there is the “One who is holding back” (ὁ κατέχων) this evil man, but only until this “One” himself/itself “is out of the middle” (ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται). Again, this most reasonably is a reference to God Himself, His sovereign rule over the story of creation, and His patience towards the Jews, waiting for them to repent of their rejection of Jesus (cf. 2 Peter 3). Paul is saying that as soon as God decides as He tells this story that we are a part of and runs out of patience, He will complete His judgment of the Jews. Then, it will be time for, first, the most ruthless leader of all in the Middle East to arise and mistreat the Jews in Israel and, then, the Messiah to return and destroy this evil man and his followers in order to set up the Kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem (cf. Daniel 10-12; Revelation 19,20).

<sup>20</sup> καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος Ὁ[Ἰησοῦς] ἄνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ – At the appointed time, the ultimate rebel against God will be revealed by God, but Jesus will destroy him when *he* visits the earth as its supreme ruler at his second coming to destroy his enemies and establish the Kingdom of Israel.

cf. **Rev. 19:11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges [rules] and wages war. **12** His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems [crowns]; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. **13** He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. **15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce

wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

<sup>21</sup> οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους – The chief human rebel will himself perform a grand appearance into history where he announces himself as ruler and king (parousia) on the land of Israel like that of Jesus to follow. But his is a false appearance in that, while he claims to be God, it is for evil purposes and corresponds to the general spirit of rebellion against God in the world because of mankind's moral depravity and willingness to buy into Satan's lies. And it is accompanied by false miracles and powerful actions that appear to be copies of what God has done in human history, in order to deceive people and convince them to follow this false god, the Man of Lawlessness and Evil, whose ultimate goal we find out from Revelation is to destroy both the Jews as God's earthly chosen people and bona fide followers of Jesus who have authentic faith.

It will be a huge mistake for those Christians who think that God has changed his promise of a great nation from the Jews to the church to support this man in his antipathy towards the Jews. But this could happen.

<sup>22</sup> καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἡ ἀδικίας ἡ τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτούς – People will follow the leadership of this chief rebel against God because they have refused to exercise a love for God's truth. This is his main goal, to deceive people and convince them to remain opposed to God so that they end up being condemned and destroyed by Him. This is always Satan's main goal, whether among the Jews or the Gentiles.

<sup>23</sup> καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἡπέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει – Because of people's rebellion against God, Paul says that God conveys to them a deceiving influence that continues to contribute to their being deceived, with the result that their worldviews are marked by error instead of truth. Indeed, they are wholly committed to false ideas.

This is why it should be no surprise that there are as many false ideas and people who believe them as there are in our own day when the mystery of lawlessness is at work.

<sup>24</sup> ἵνα κριθῶσιν ἡ πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες ἡ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ – God's purposes for people's continued rebellion and being deceived by Satan's lies is so that He may exercise His justice and eternal condemnation towards them. These people are also characterized by a heartfelt pleasure in doing evil and being disobedient towards God because they are not committed in their hearts to God and biblical morality.

<sup>25</sup> Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφειλομένον εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ ἡ κυρίου, ὅτι εἶλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἡ ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας – Paul switches back to the first person plural. In contrast to the people who will follow in the footsteps of the rebellion of the Son of Destruction, who will claim unparalleled grandeur as a human being, Paul refers once again to how astounded he is that the Thessalonians were granted biblical belief in Jesus as the Messiah and are even now continuing to hold on to their belief. He is so impressed with these Gentiles' enduring belief in the face of such difficult circumstances in their city that he feels compelled again (cf. 1:3,4) to express his gratitude to God for the authenticity of their Christianity. He also claims that God has loved them, because He chose them even before He brought the creation into existence. Paul states that the means which God has used to bring about the Thessalonians' salvation is the inner change of their hearts by the Spirit of God which manifested itself through their belief in the truth of the gospel which was presented to them.

Another option for translating this is “in the holiness of [your] spirit and belief in the truth.” Thus Paul and his companions know that the Thessalonians will acquire eternal salvation because of the evidence of their being different from the world as established by God's plan for them, i.e., in their spirits, and of their longstanding belief in the biblical message that they originally presented to them perhaps about a year and a half ago.

In this verse, Paul mentions the basis of the Thessalonians' salvation, God's choosing them from the beginning of the creation, implying that God's choice actually occurred before He brought the creation into existence. And he mentions the condition of salvation which God and they have fulfilled—the Spirit's changing their inwardness which has resulted in their belief in the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah.

cf. 1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus the Messiah, to the chosen visitors of those scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the holiness of the Spirit (ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος), for obedience to and being sprinkled by the blood of Jesus the Messiah—may grace and shalom be multiplied to you.

cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:4 We appreciate, brothers, who are loved by God, His choice of you, 1:5 because our good news did not come to you by spoken word only but also by power, by the Holy Spirit, and with complete certainty, just as you appreciate what kind of people we were among you for your sake.

<sup>26</sup> εἰς ὃ ἡ καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ἡ ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The relative pronoun ὃ is neuter, indicating that Paul is referring to everything that he has just mentioned, and probably mainly to the salvation for which God chose them in eternity past. Thus, it is to the salvation, set-apartness of either their spirit or the Spirit of God, and belief in the truth to which God has called them. He has moved towards them in their existential lives in such a way that they have come to hear, understand, and embrace the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah with the eventual outcome that they are rescued from God's wrath and condemnation. Paul also describes the purpose of God's calling them in terms of their obtaining access to the very magnificent environment that Jesus will inhabit in the eternal Kingdom of God. This environment will be so magnificent because it will be eternal, morally

perfect, and ruled by the most important person in the creation, the Messiah who suffered in order to qualify as the high priest and king of the Kingdom of God's citizens'.

<sup>27</sup> Ἀρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν – This is certainly Paul's standard exhortation to the readers of his letters, especially to those who are suffering persecution as much as these Thessalonian Christians, that they hold on to the biblical message that his apostolic co-workers and he have taught them. This means that they should continue to believe it to the end of their lives for the sake of their own eternal salvations.

Paul mentions the fact that they have communicated this message to them by both their own mouths when they were physically in Thessalonica a short time before and by their first letter, which they also wrote from Corinth fairly recently. The content of the apostolic message is that which has been handed down from Jesus himself as well as from the other apostles and has its foundation in the OT writings.

<sup>28</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ ὁ θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι – Paul hopes and prays that both the very ideas regarding Jesus as the Messiah and God Himself as the source of their existence and sonship in God, who Himself is the completely independent and gracious source of existence, love, hope, and apostleship to Paul and his companions, will continue to work in the hearts, minds, and wills of the Thessalonian Christians. In other words, God has loved and persuaded Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy of the truth of the teachings that have been handed down from the OT writings through Jesus and the other apostles, and this persuasion even has an eternal quality too in that it will last into the final age of the Kingdom of God and never go away. God has also given them hope, which is the only hope that can be called a good hope, because it pertains to people's eternal well-being and not just to something future in the present realm.

<sup>29</sup> παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίζαι ἐν παντί 'ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ' ἀγαθῶ – Just as God has powerfully caused Paul and his companions to carry out their apostolic responsibilities, they would have God cause the Thessalonians to continue to be convinced of the truth of the apostolic message in order to provide them with sufficient motivation and encouragement to do and say what is right in the midst of their difficult and oppressive circumstances.

<sup>30</sup> Τὸ λοιπὸν προσεύχεσθε, ἀδελφοί, περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου τρέχη καὶ δοξάζεται καθὼς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul knows exactly what responsibility that God has assigned him in this earthly realm, which is to be the apostle to the Gentiles of the message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Thus, it makes total sense that he would ask his readers, who are simply living out their very typical lives in a northern Macedonian city in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire, although now as Christians, to pray that he and his companions may be quite successful at what they are doing, so that more and more people (in Corinth and anywhere else they may visit) will believe in and find awe-inspiring the information of Jesus as their Messiah and in the one, true, transcendent God as their Creator and Author of this cosmic story.

<sup>31</sup> καὶ ἵνα ῥυσθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀτόπων καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων· οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις – Paul also wants the Thessalonians to pray that God will keep him safe, even though it's probably not going to happen, from people who seek to harm him and put a stop to the spread of the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. He knows that there is going to be fervent opposition to his co-workers and him, because, as he says, not everyone is going to believe the truth of God, so that they will be, in the depth of their moral depravity and at some level outwardly, be opposed to God, Jesus, Paul, his apostolic co-workers, and the truth.

<sup>32</sup> Πιστὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος, ὃς στηρίζει ὑμᾶς καὶ φυλάξει ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ – In spite of the fact in v. 2 that not everyone will believe the good news of God's mercy through the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, resulting in even more persecution of their readers, Paul is still confident, most certainly based upon God's sovereignty and promises, that He will continue to cause the Thessalonian Christians to believe the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and to protect them from the strong influence that Satan has on cultures to cause human beings to rebel against God and even give up their faith, thereby proving themselves disqualified from eternal life.

<sup>33</sup> πεποιθᾶμεν δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ἂ παραγγέλλομεν τ' [καὶ] ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε – Paul's confidence regarding the endurance of the Thessalonians' belief is based not only on God's sovereign promises, but also on the daily behavior of these Christians. They are responding positively and in a very committed fashion to the apostolic message by pursuing obedience to all that he has said they are morally obligated to do. Paul also wholeheartedly believes that they will continue obeying their message into the future—because of the implied inner work of God in them.

<sup>34</sup> Ὁ δὲ κύριος κατευθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul appeals to God to orient them further towards loving Him and persevering in their belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. These constitute the foundational elements of a human being's subjectivity when he is traveling along the path of life to the eternal Kingdom of God.

<sup>35</sup> Παραγγέλλομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν παρελάβοσαν παρ' ἡμῶν – Paul must have heard that there were people within the Thessalonian Christian community who were either responding with too much excitement to the false news that Jesus' parousia is about to happen or taking advantage of one of the fundamental biblical commandments to love one another, something that was radically different from what people were used to in the Roman pagan society—or both. The result was that these people were not working for a living but, instead, thinking that their earthly existences of making a living were about to end or relying strictly on the support of other Christians—or both. Paul is saying in this paragraph that their behavior is completely contrary to the apostolic message, which

teaches that Jesus' parousia is imminent only when the Man of Lawlessness is revealed, so that all Christians must remain responsible and work for their living in order not to rely on the charity of their fellow Christians—even though the apostolic message is all about charity, grace, and mercy. Here is a dichotomy of the gospel—believers are to exercise charity and generosity towards other Christians who are in need while also working hard to avoid having to receive charity themselves.

<sup>36</sup> Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἶδατε πῶς δεῖ μμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἠτακτήσαμεν ἐν ὑμῖν – If anyone could rightly require and expect that others support them for their “work” of proclaiming the NT message (cf. 1 Corinthians 8-10), while also not making a living in a typically acceptable and moral way within society, it is an apostle like Paul along with his apostolic co-workers. However, instead of doing so in Thessalonica, Paul did use his skills to earn a living within society and outside the Christian community and away from his actual apostolic responsibilities. Paul calls the opposite kind of expectations and behavior, i.e., requiring that people support them while they perform their responsibilities as apostolic workers, irresponsible, because, as Paul says in 1 and 2 Corinthians (chapters 8-10 and chapter 2 respectively), it is the same as “peddling the biblical message,” which communicates the very antithesis of what God is all about, that He is an independent and uncoerced provider of free grace and mercy that cannot be earned. Therefore, His servants who claim to convey His ideas by virtue of their word should not earn their living from what they do if it is not absolutely clear that what all Christians are receiving from God is strictly by his grace.

<sup>37</sup> οὐδὲ δωρεὰν ἄρτον ἐράγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ' ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ ἑνυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τίνα ὑμῶν – Paul provides the practical details of what he is talking about. He paid for everything he needed to stay alive with money that he earned from work that he did apart from his apostolic responsibilities and within the Greek, Thessalonian society. One of his desires was not to place his existence in the hands of the these Christians. He did not want them to support him and misconstrue the message of God by thinking that it involved earning something from Him instead of being graced it by Him according to His sovereign will. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:9ff., 1 Corinthians 9.

<sup>38</sup> οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἐαυτοὺς τύπον δώμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς – Paul states his perspective on the apostles and their work in relation to money. God has given them a position in this world whereby they have the authority to speak on behalf of God and Jesus as the Messiah, indeed, with the same level of authority and accuracy of thinking as God and His Messiah.

There is no one more valuable and nothing more valuable than the apostles and their co-workers with their message. Therefore, if we are talking about paying top dollar for top dollar items, then it would make sense to pay a gazillion dollars to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy for their work and the information that they are providing. Thus, they have the right to “earn” their living from preaching the gospel.

Nevertheless, for them either to expect this or to demand it would be completely contrary to what God and Paul are all about. It would send the wrong message, that of God's expecting people to earn His blessings instead of being given them according to His sovereign and independent grace and will. Also, by acting the way they did, Paul and his companions wanted to provide the Thessalonians with an example that they should follow—earning their “living” outside of their participating in the Christian community and apart from their directly communicating the biblical ideas. They would have also wanted the Thessalonians to avoid freeloading off one another and taking undo advantage of each other's love and generosity. Yes, Christians are called to be charitable, but also just as importantly they are called to work responsibly and earn their own living when possible.

<sup>39</sup> καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἡμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο παρηγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθίετω – Paul had even made it explicit initially when he taught the Thessalonians that people do not deserve (speaking of deserving) to eat if they are not willing to earn a living outside the Christian community and, thereby, pay for their own food with their own hard-earned money. It is interesting that, so soon, relatively speaking, after Paul had explicitly commanded all the Thessalonians to act in a particular way, that some of them chose to disregard what they had said. But it also makes sense that this has happened because the people are believing a false message to the effect that Jesus is returning soon, which Paul refutes in chapter 2. So it is not that everyone is being affected to the same degree by the false information regarding the return of Jesus, but some of them are definitely taking advantage of it and choosing not to work for a living anymore.

Good testimony to human beings' allergy to truth and refusal to continue to think it through and adhere to its implications, especially if they can find some excuse such that Jesus is returning soon. This truth either can encourage people to work harder and pursue righteousness for the sake of glorifying God with their whole lives as Jesus' return approaches, or it can give them an excuse to shun their responsibilities, even that of morality.

<sup>40</sup> Ἀκούομεν γὰρ τινὰς περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους – Paul has found out what was happening within the Thessalonian gathering of Christians. There are believers in the Christian community who claim to be doing valuable things for their fellow Christians (but merely acting like “busybodies”), for which they think that they deserve to be compensated financially. However, both their attitudes towards the biblical message and their work are wrong and irrelevant to the actual truth of the message—that Christians should work responsibly while also being charitable – but not unwise! These Christians are sending the wrong message to their fellow believers and the non-Christian community.

<sup>41</sup> τοῖς δὲ τοιοῦτοις παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἑν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἐαυτῶν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν – “In the Lord Jesus the Messiah” = within the context of the truth about him as the Messiah. Paul repeat his commandment, and this time specifically to those who have been disobeying the same

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previously said commandment. While speaking within the truth of the gospel, he says that, if these particular Thessalonian Christians truly desire eternal life, then they are morally obligated to work without drawing unnecessary attention to the fact that they are and pay for their staying alive from what they dutifully earn—and all this outside the Christian community itself.

<sup>42</sup> Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἔγκακήσητε καλοποιούντες – Paul provides the corollary to what he has been talking about, that Christians rightly should have a passion and zest for doing what is right according to the apostolic message, by obeying God and pursuing morality, which includes making a living independent of the charity of the church. The implication is that if they ever lose this earnestness, God is not at work within them, and they are not authentic believers.

And these people may have lost their passion for goodness because they think Jesus is returning soon, which may therefore be simply naiveté on their part. But now that Paul has corrected their theology and reminded them that the man who will personify rebellion against God must arise first from the Middle East—and then Jesus will return!

<sup>43</sup> Εἰ δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον σημειώσθε ἵνα ἐντραπή – Paul encourages the Thessalonians to observe carefully how people are responding to this letter, and if they are not willing to obey him and his apostolic co-workers, then the Thessalonians should not follow their example and mimic their inappropriate behavior. Thus, by refusing to act like those who are ignoring the apostolic message, the authentic believers will provide them with a didactic tool that, hopefully, will lead them to regard this message as something that they should listen to carefully and obey.

<sup>44</sup> καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγείσθε, ἀλλὰ νοθεύετε ὡς ἀδελφόν – In spite of the irresponsible behavior of anyone within the Thessalonian Christian community, Paul would have the people of genuine faith look upon this person as a believer like themselves. This must be because he hopes that this morally depraved human being is simply acting in an immature manner and not out of abject rebellion against God. In other words, not all the dots have connected in this “believer’s” head as they should, but the other Christians can help them do so by not following him in his example of disobeying Paul’s apostolic message. Thus, they can wait for God in His grace to convince this person fully that he is not responding to God properly.

Paul is not commanding the Christians to ostracize his immature person from the church community. Instead, he is exhorting them not to follow his example while also continuing to teach him by their words and their example.

<sup>45</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δόξῃ ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ. ὁ κύριος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul’s desire for his readers is that they obtain the shalom of God, i.e., eternal life in the Kingdom of God, where existence will be completely free of pain and suffering. But this will happen only if the Thessalonian Christians comply with the apostolic message as they encounter all the experiences of their overall journeys through life. This will also happen only if God continues working in their lives by His grace—certainly as God has promised to do, to which these authors have already referred.

<sup>46</sup> Ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὶ Παύλου, ὃ ἐστὶν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ οὕτως γράφω – Paul takes the pen out of probably Silvanus’ hand (cf. 1 Peter 5:12) and writes this and the following greeting to the Thessalonians.

<sup>47</sup> Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul knows that it is only by God’s independent and sovereign grace because as most demonstratively exhibited by what Jesus as the Messiah has been willing to do that the Thessalonians will reach their goal of the eternal Kingdom of God. He appeals to God for all that He has promised to His chosen people to happen to the Thessalonian gathering of believers.