

PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS - OUTLINE OF TEACHING

First, let us share a little background knowledge of the Church at Thessalonica, and Paul's purpose for writing these Epistles. Paul founded the Thessalonian Church during his second Apostolic Mission journey which is recorded in Ac 15:36-18:22 (CP Ac 15:36-18:22). See also author's study *Paul the Apostle – A Chosen Vessel into God*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**. Paul's purpose for writing the Epistles to the Thessalonians was to confirm the truths he had previously taught them concerning the First Resurrection and the revelation of Antichrist. The First Resurrection is when Jesus comes again to take all the Saints of God, both living and dead – Old Testament and New Testament alike – back to Heaven to live with Him throughout eternity. Christians in the contemporary Church refer to this event as the "Rapture". We will learn more about those teachings as this study progresses.

(CP 1Th 1:1-10). Paul introduces himself, together with Silas and Timothy, as the author of the Epistles to the Thessalonians in his opening verse in both letters (CP 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1). After his introduction in 1:1 Paul goes on to commend the Thessalonians for their faithful and unflinching witness to Christ, not only in their own immediate regions but everywhere they went (CP 1:2-9). V10 is a clear reference to the First Resurrection when the living Church will be translated to Heaven by Jesus to escape the Great Tribulation and the ensuing wrath of God that will be poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants at that time (CP V10). See also this author's comments on 1Th 1:4 and 1:10, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP 1Th 2:1-20). V1-12 here is a review of Paul's ministry – his message and his conduct – when he established the Church at Thessalonica. The point he makes is that the primary ministry of Christians is the ministry of character. What Christians are is far more important than anything they say. Paul only ever saw his ministry as a sacred trust from God for His Glory to manifest not only in the salvation, but safekeeping as well, of as many Souls as possible. Mature Christians' unconscious influence on new converts speaks more loudly than their conscious influence. In other words, the character of the worker decides the quality of his work. The goal of Paul's ministry was that Christians would all walk worthy of God. (CP V1-12 with Tit 2:7-8). See also author's comments on Tit 2:7-8 and all related cross reference Scriptures referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**. Next, in 1Th 2:13-16 Paul reviews the Thessalonians' response to the Gospel. They accepted it as being from God, not men. Paul's reference to the Jews killing Christ in V15 does not mean that they personally killed Him, but that they were the instigators of His death by the Romans (CP V13-16). See also author's comments on 1Th 2:14-15, and all related cross reference Scriptures referred to

therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

It should be noted here that Paul did not complain about the Jews killing Jesus to promote Anti-Semitism – he was merely stating an historical fact. The Jews were totally opposed to the Christian Faith and the Gospel and in doing what they did to Jesus they truly believed they were pleasing God. Jesus himself knew that (CP Lu 23:34), so did Peter (CP Ac 2:22-23). The Jews did not know God Himself had predestined Jesus' death before the foundation of the earth (CP Gen 3:15; 1Pe 1:18-20). Next in V17-20 in 1Th 2, Paul explains his failure to return to Thessalonica – Satan hindered him. This is clearly a reference to the outworking of the demons – Paul's *Thorn in the flesh*, instigated by God after Paul was taken up to the Third Heaven for a time of learning with Jesus (CP V17-20). It is obvious from what Paul says in V19, that Christians will all know each other in Heaven – the Thessalonian Church would be his *Crown of Rejoicing*, V19 is also another clear reference to Jesus coming again to take all the Saints of God, both living and dead – Old Testament and New Testament alike – back to Heaven with Him at the First Resurrection, which is the major theme of this Epistle (see also author's comments on 1Th 2:18 and 2:19-20, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**).

(CP 1Th 3:1-13). V1-10 here underlines the importance of "following up" new converts to Christ. It is not enough to lead someone to Christ and then leave them to their own devices; they must be followed up in order to help them grow in Grace. That is why Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonian converts when he could not go himself because he had to stay in Athens. In V12 Paul prays that the love the Thessalonian Christians have for each other will abound even more, not only toward each other, but to all people. This teaching extends to the contemporary Church also. *The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* in V13 is yet another clear reference to Jesus coming again to take all the Saints of God, both living and dead – Old Testament and New Testament alike – back to Heaven with Him at the First Resurrection (see also author's comments on 1Th 3:12 and 3:13, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**).

(CP 1Th 4:1-18). It is incumbent upon every Christian in the contemporary Church to thoroughly acquaint themselves with Paul's teaching in this chapter. There are three principal subjects: Holiness, Love, and the First Resurrection. The chapter opens with Paul exhorting the Thessalonian Christians to walk in Holiness and thus please God. This directive extends to every professing Christian, regardless of the era of Church history in which they live, or to which Church they belong (CP V1-8). V9-12 is a similar teaching to V12 in Ch 3. Paul commands Christians everywhere to increase in love toward others (CP 9-12 with 1Th 3:12). Next, V13-18 in 1Th 4, is one of the most important teaching in Scripture. It concerns the First

Resurrection, when Jesus comes again to take all the Saints of God, both living and dead, Old Testament and New Testament alike, back to Heaven with Him (CP V13-18). See also author's comments on 1Th 4:4 and 4:13-18, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP 1Th 5:1-28). After completing his teaching on the First Resurrection when the Church will go to Heaven with Jesus in Ch 4, Paul turns his attention now to the *Day of the Lord* when the inhabitants of earth will be overtaken by the events of the *Great Tribulation* which will follow upon the revelation of Antichrist (CP V1-11). Next, Paul's injunction to Christians in V12-14 to esteem those who watch out for their wellbeing in the Christian walk, and his subsequent directives to the Thessalonian Church in V15-27, also extends to every professing Christian in the contemporary Church (CP 1Th 5:12-26). Paul's message for the professing Church in this Epistle is so important that he commands it to be read out to "all the brethren", which in turn, as previously stated at the outset of this study, applies to every professing Christian in the contemporary Church thoroughly acquainting themselves with its teaching. Paul then closed the Epistle (CP V27-28). See also author's comments on 1Th 5:1-11, 5:12-13, 5:17 and 5:21, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

Now to Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians and the revelation of Antichrist and onset of the Great Tribulation, by which the earth and all its inhabitants will be affected. Paul wrote this second Epistle to the Thessalonian Christians to encourage them in their afflictions and to set the record straight regarding Christ's Second Coming. They had been misled into believing that it had already occurred and they had been abandoned, and they believed that it was Paul himself who was teaching

this (CP 2Th 1:1-12). After greeting the Church of the Thessalonians in V1-2, Paul encourages them to persevere in their faith in God for their salvation in V3-6, and he then sets the record straight concerning Christ's Second Coming in V7-10 (CP V1-10). Paul then prays over the Church in V11-12 (CP V11-12). This is a Prayer every Christian can pray for their brothers and sisters in Christ (see also author's comments on 2Th 1:7-10 and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**).

(CP 2Th 2:1-17). The "falling away" Paul refers to here in V3 signifies the living Church being caught up – "Raptured" – to Heaven by Jesus at the First Resurrection. The "He" in V7 clearly refers to the Church (CP V1-7 with 1Th 4:16-18; Jn 14:1-3 and 1Cor 15:51-58). Those Scriptures all refer to the Rapture. Antichrist will be revealed after the Rapture. 2Th 2:9-12 teaches that no one left on earth after the Church is Raptured, who has heard the Gospel and rejected it, will ever be given the opportunity again to be saved (CP V9-12). See also author's comments on 2Th 2:1-3, 2:6-8, 2:9-12 with Jn 14:1-3 and 1Cor 15:51, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**.

(CP 2Th 3:1-18). Here Paul admonishes the Thessalonian Christians and again by extension, every professing Christian regardless of the Church era, not to fraternise with those in the Church who are walking disorderly. *Disorderly* in this context means refuses to work to keep oneself. Christians who wilfully disobey God's Word are to be disfellowshipped which hopefully could make them ashamed and cause them to repent in order to be restored to fellowship (CP Lu 15:11-24; 17:3-4; 2Cor 2:6-8). See also author's comments on 2Th 3:6 and 3:14, and all related cross reference Scriptures and studies referred to therein, in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**. This study on Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians is now completed.