

Survey of II Thessalonians
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INTRODUCTION:

The background of the occasion of this epistle would properly be covered in the study of the first epistle; only a brief statement will be included here, insuring the inclusion of some important considerations.

The vision of Acts 16:9 resulted in Paul, and company's, first excursion into Europe. Their introduction to this New World began in Philippi (Acts 16:12), the chief city of that Macedonian region. Amphipolis and Apollonia apparently were as lightly touched as the amount of record devoted to them. Then they came to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).

Paul's companions included Silas, Timothy (Acts 15:40-16:3), and Luke (16:10). While Timothy is not mentioned in the record of events, he obviously was in the quartet. The salutation of the Epistle shows him to be in the company in Corinth, from whence we believe Paul penned the letter (I and II Thessalonians 1:1). One might question how he escaped the imprisonment in Philippi. The problem is no bigger than the absence of Daniel in the ordeal of the three Hebrew children; nor they, in the matter of the den of lions (Daniel, Chapters 3 and 6, respectively). A multitude of possibilities can be suggested. A good basis will make one tenable.

One consideration is Timothy's status as a missionary in training. Paul and Silas were seasoned in the faith and ministry (Acts 15:22-27). Timothy was not. He was likely in somewhat the same position that John Mark had been on Paul's initial journey (Acts 13:5). Some distinction may be made, however, as John is called their "minister" (Greek. υπηρετας, "under-rower, sub-rower").ⁱ Timothy was not quite in this position, as he was considered a missionary.ⁱⁱ But, he was in a position of submission to these two elder statesmen. There is, then, no reason to speak of him in the record, until he comes into a ministry of his own.

Luke, of course, was simply along as the keeper of the diary, and perhaps Paul's (and company's) physician.

The ministry in Thessalonica lasted only from 15 to 27 days (Acts 17:2), depending upon what day of the week they arrived, and departed. Some 15 to 18 days are the likelihood. Not much time in which to evangelize, organize, and establish a local church, the ministry to which they were called and commissioned in Antioch (Acts 13:2: 14:21-28).ⁱⁱⁱ

Three interesting words, or phrases, are penned by Paul, in Acts 17:3, describing his ministry in Thessalonica:

1. "Reasoned with them out of the scriptures" (Greek, "διελεγετω αυτοις απο των γραφων"). It literally means, "Drawing arguments from."
2. "Opening" (Greek, "διανοιγων", or, "open by dividing, explain, or expound." The Word is used by our Lord, in Luke 24:31-35, concerning the eyes, the scriptures, and the understanding.
3. "Alleging" (Greek, "παρατιθεμενος," in the middle voice), as, "to set forth, explain."

One must see the true work of the Lord is presenting the Word of God (in contrast to man's), rightly divided, set forth before blind sinners (note II Corinthians 4:3,4), that they might see.

The responses of the people are also instructive. Some believed (Greek, "πεισθησαν, to "be persuaded" (note the commentary, below, on 2:13). The negative is found in John 3:36). It is also in the Passive Voice. Some consorted (προσεκληρωθησαν, "to obtain by lot). In the passive, it is that they were allotted (by God), to Paul.

In the matter of the opposition that arose after that third Sabbath day (Acts 17:5-9), only the matter of Jason is problematic. The authorities took "security of Jason" (Greek, "το ικανον παρα του ιασονο," "The security from Jason"). "Security" is "sufficient." He may have "went their bail," but then how is it they were allowed to leave? Preferred is, that he paid a sum to insure that they would not cause any more problems. "The other," is literally, "The rest" (Greek, των λοιπων). Whatever Jason had to do, the rest had to do. The logical conclusion is that both sides had to put up security as a guaranty of restoration and preservation of the peace.

THE MASTERING OF MISINFORMATION II THESSALONIANS

I. COMMENDATION OF ABOUNDING QUALITIES (1:1-12)

A. Paul's Delight in Them (3,4). Their:

1. Increasing Faith (3b)
2. Intense Love (3c)
3. Enduring Patience (4) A Token (Greek, ενδειγμα, "evidence, proof"): The only time used in the New Testament. It is anarthrous.

B. Paul's Declaration to Them (5-10) God will Repay.

1. The Righteous Judgment of God (5, 7b-9)
2. The Righteous Recompense of God (6, 10)

a. Wrath for the Troublers (6, 7b-10)

It will be a time of:

1) Flaming Fire (5)

2) Full Vengeance, "to inflict punishment").

Upon those who:

a) Don't know God, "to perceive, discern, experience")

b) Won't Obey God, "to harken to command, to obey")

3) Final Death (9) Death, by definition (not dictionary, but Biblically), is separation, as here, "from the presence."

It is:

a) Forever

b) From:

1)) The Presence of the Lord

2)) The Power of His Glory

b. Rest for the Troubled (7a) Note the dispensational accuracy:

The church saints must wait even until the Tribulation Saints have suffered, that all may obtain rest together.^{iv} Note that "Rest," is in the accusative, is singular; and not a verb.

C. Paul's Desire for Them (11, 12)

II. CORRECTION OF ALLEDGED INSTRUCTION (2:1-12)

A. The Problem (1-3a)

1. The Letter (1,2b)

2. The Lie (2c-3a)

"Day of Christ" is accurate, as per Textus Receptus. "At hand," is "has fully come," i.e. the rapture has already occurred, and is over.

B. The Proof (3b)

1. The Apostasy (3b). "That day shall not come" is in italics; we have room to interpret. The understanding would be, "such a thing will not occur (i.e. the completion of the Day of Christ) except the "falling away" comes first. If "apostasia" (Greek, *αποστασια*) refers "to the turning away from the Faith," then we retain the appearance of a problem. But, if it refers to the Rapture, good sense is made of the passage, i.e. the rapture must occur prior to the completion of the Day of Christ. The Greek word, however, is used only two times in the New Testament: Acts 21:21, and here. There, it definitely refers to a turning away from doctrine. Luke penned those words, and would be very familiar with Paul's own vocabulary. Old Testament equivalents are found in Joshua 22:22, and II Chronicles 29:19. The same idea prevails in those passages. The weight of usage is against interpreting the word, in our text passage, as a reference to the Rapture.^v

2. The Anti-Christ (3c-4, 8-12). The Anti-Christ must be revealed. Since the Thessalonians obviously do not yet know his identity, the Rapture could not have already occurred and the Day of Christ cannot yet be fulfilled. The Anti-Christ will not be fully revealed until the middle of the Tribulation. Some would try to postulate a mid-tribulation Rapture, based partially upon this. But surely, with our knowledge of prophecy, believers would be able to discern the rise of such a man. The evidences would be clear. To even see the beginnings of it would be to realize the Rapture has already occurred. Or, that it is indeed 3 ½ years away. Then, we would know the time frame, and that would be inconsistent with the profuse admonitions to be ready. We could relax for 3 years, or more, and enjoy the peace of Anti-Christ. That is certainly an anti-biblical concept! The point is, the Thessalonians were not able to recognize such a man, or events.^{vi}
3. The Absence of the Holy Spirit (5-7). Further, Holy Spirit must absent Himself from His office work of John 16:7-11. Only when the Church is gone, shall it be so. This reminds one of a two-fold error espoused by many, concerning the Holy Spirit, Pentecost and the Rapture. First, it is incorrect, concerning Acts 2, to talk about the Holy Spirit coming. He didn't come on Pentecost: He has always been here. Rather, He began a new office work, according to John 14:17. Similarly, then, He will not leave, at the Rapture. Much erroneous teaching is dispensed concerning what is going to happen as a result of the Holy Spirit being "gone." Rather than being absent from the world, He simply is going to revert back to a ministry like He had in the Old Testament era. He will continue in the world, but will no longer be the Restrainer: will no longer indwell us--we who are "lights in the world" (Phil 2:15), and "salt" (Mt 5:13), functions which we will no longer exercise following our departure. Theologically, then, must we conclude that the Holy Spirit will no longer indwell the Bride, following the Rapture: that we will depart and leave Him behind? This is certainly an interesting point of doctrine worth developing. Suffice it to say, for now, that He is also omnipresent. He certainly is able to indwell us, if that be the case, when we reside in our new home, and yet continue a ministry on earth.

III. THE CONTRAST OF AUTHENTIC INSTRUCTION (2:13-17)

Their Choice Position in Christ (13, 14).

They are:

A. Chosen to Salvation (13)

"Soteria" is "deliverance." In context, Paul could have in mind, deliverance from the wrath of "The Tribulation," as this is the main subject of the letter. However, while that would ease the above theological problem it is not suited to the context of the last words of the verse--by the Holy Spirit's Work, of:

1. Setting apart
2. Convincing of the Truth. "Belief" is "πιστει," "faith, belief, firm persuasion." The word stems from a form of the word, referring to the "goddess of persuasion."

B. Called to Glory (14)

C. Challenged to Steadfastness (15-17)

IV. THE CONTENT OF ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS (3:1-15).

A. Confidence in Their Obedience (1-5)

1. To Supplicate (1,2) for:

a. Preaching (1)

b. Protection (2)

2. To Stay Faithful (3,4)

B. Command to be Obedient (6-15)

1. To Withdraw from Those Who Walk Wrongly (6-11,13-15)

a. According to our Instruction (6, 10)

b. After our Example (7-9)

c. Admonishing the Disobedient (14,15)

2. To Work for Their Own Welfare (12)

Conclusion (3:16-18)

ⁱ All definitions cited of Greek words are from Thayers unless otherwise noted.

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