

FIRST THESSALONIANS



The Harbour today-author's photo

INTRODUCTION

THE BAY AND DISTANT HARBOUR FROM THE WHITE TOWER

The Via Egnatia stretched from Rome to Byzantium and passed through Modern Salonika, where it is spanned by the Arch of Galerius. The arch was erected in 303A.D. to celebrate the emperor's victory over Persia. Galerius had Dimitrios martyred for his faith; the saint is commemorated by the 5th c. church in his name. On the arch is an inscription which mentions "politarchs" [Acts 17.8] which Roman office had been rejected by scholars. It was Origen [185-254] who attributed to our Lord Jesus the saying, "He who is near me is near the fire". In 1 Thessalonians 3.4 we read, "When we were with you we continued to tell you that we would be persecuted." Christians then and now are no strangers to "fiery trials" and this epistle reminds us that the Christian life is not to be lived indolent and cannot be expected to be a "bed of roses"

The first letter which was written to speak into distress in the church we may call the "winter epistle"(written towards the end of A.D.51) and the second that quickly followed in A.D.52 we may loosely call the "spring epistle".

Kob Coffey, Westgate 18 September 2011

ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION

CHAPTER 1

BIBLE COMMENTARY No.52

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CHAPTER ANALYSIS

This chapter greets and salutes an evangelistic church. As Paul's first epistle dated AD51 it follows the visit that so far as Macedonia was concerned "turned the world upside down"(Acts 17.6). Paul arrived in Corinth on his second missionary campaign to be greeted with Timothy's glowing report of the resilience of Christians whose faith was under fire in the northern city of Thessalonica prompted this letter of encouragement in which he began to meet a number of relevant questions the Christians there were now asking.

THESSALONICA

In 316 BC Cassandros named it after his wife-whose name was given by Philip at the time of his expansion in Thessaly. Euripides 450 years before Paul's visit spoke of "the Thessalian trick" for among the ancients financial *skulduggery* was rife. The city has been continuously inhabited through 2300 years supporting the claim of Greece to be the world's oldest democracy. Its church too was the second planted in Europe-and had marked success in outreach.

OLDEST CLAY INSCRIPTION 1-3

The Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6.24 has been confirmed as the oldest clay inscription in the world. Paul extracted the words "grace" and "peace" from that source as he wrote to the churches – because the great High Priest who wears our nature in glory is the Lord of the church-and we believers are all priests to God in what has come to be called "the priesthood of all believers".

In all 13 epistles accredited to the apostle Paul this greeting stands at the head of each letter. *Hebrews* doesn't have it although at its heart is the theme of Christ's high priestly ministry and in a sense *that epistle*

pursues the fondest theme of Paul using 228 references to the OT and examining in depth the grounds for “perseverance” and its secret – “keeping nigh to God” and “inheriting the promises and hope” that anchors us to our interceding and soon-coming Lord. There are many who believe with fair reason that Barnabas authored the epistle to the Hebrews and there is in the letter possible evidence of an author trained in Alexandria as Cypriot Jews would have been-whereas Paul was trained in Jerusalem of course.

THE LORD JESUS

As Henry George Liddle and Robert Scott remark in their lexical notes on **KURIOS** in Greek "the epithet conveys the meaning of JEHOVAH." It occurs 279 times in the 13 epistles and when added to JESUS (31) and to JESUS CHRIST (132) the figure **rises to 442** references distributed as follows: - Romans 44 1Cor 65 2Cor29 Gal 7 Eph25 Phil15 Col 12 1Thess 25 2Thess 20 1 Tim 8 2Tim 23 Titus 1 Philemon 5.

HOW TO PRAY 2-3

Particularly – each Thessalonian believer is mentioned, and that in **Thanksgiving**

Powerfully-Paul has learned like his Lord to pray within the vow situation. People are “on” his prayers – more than “in” them. The idea is “on the shoulders”. It speaks of the continual bearing of those who are loved. He will undertake work for them and vow his life in their support. Here Paul uses the word **POIEO** – meaning that he is praying **Perpetually**.-“Without ceasing” Rom1.9; 1Thess1.2; 1Thess2.13; 1Thess5.17; 2Tim1.3 as “remembrancers” of: -

1 The work of faith – energised by the Holy Spirit

2 The labour of love – beavering away for exactly the right motives – their response to God’s love

3 Your patience of the hope. The three “genitives” relate to three major Christian virtues.

So we thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers we pray for; we thank God for their love of Christ and that they hope for His return – when under stress – and in this context we may mention their needs too. When believers are inactive faith is weak; when the cross is too heavy our love is cold; when we are impatient our future hope is affected.

ELECTION 4

The word **EKLOGE** means “a levy or choice of troops”, cf. Gideon’s 300. Paul is speaking of the calling out of an army to “trumpet forth the gospel” cf. Rom 11.5-7. The “remnant” picture presents 7000 who were soldiers enough not to bow to Baal. Equally in 2 Peter 1 10-11 we have “election” made sure by holiness leading to “entrance” to glory – by parallel with Israel under Joshua entering Canaan as a victorious army cf. 1Thess 4.17 **ARPAGE** – of victorious heroes. In the very strictest sense “to be elect” is to be called to be a soldier and to victory by holy living and to rest.

THE GOSPEL 5-7

The gospel came in word (LOGOS); it was ISTORIA not MUTHOS (history not mythology), **it came in “power”** – the capability of growth or overcoming opposition – and in the Holy Ghost – i.e. life giving – **and in much assurance** – full assurance.

A BECOMING APOSTLE Note that they “became” like the born Thessalonians – they quickly adapted – and yet turned the moral & spiritual world upside down-no mean feat.

BECOMING BELIEVERS – **They became mimics**-copying Paul as he humbly lived out Christ-like days among them. This meant receiving the word amid distress with joy. It could mean their circumstances and even their houses were poor & small.....so **they became prototypes (TUPOI)** – as new minted coins or models for others who would believe.

BEYOND PHILIP’S GOLDEN YEARS 8-10

So the gospel trumpet sounded out in word and power. The faith marched out all over Greece – people telling of the victorious entrance of Paul to Thessalonica – resulting in:-

1. **Turning from idols.** This is “repentance”. Euripides Lucian Thucydides & Plutarch speak of idols as “figures, phantoms of the mind, and images of women, gods, and constellations. Repentance today is little different – involving a new attitude of mind, new thoughts as to sexual purity, a turning from horoscope guidance.
2. **To serve the living God, the trustworthy God** speaking of the subject of Godhead-essence.

3. **Who freed us from the wrath to come!** This **ORGE** of divine wrath is surely ahead. The “awaiting” with patience is the more possible when we view the dreadful days ahead. This gives stimulus to the gospel. We have an enemy whose Herculean challenge to the Lord has led to Israel's warfare, Calvary, martyrdom – its resolution will be in a terrible day – from which we are spared as soldiers of the King.

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER ANALYSIS

This chapter emphasises “the test” every believer must undergo daily. David among the ancients made this a principal consideration in his living. The Nathan episode underlined its necessity and the David’s humble response is not to be wondered at – because he had learned that “the Lord tries the hearts and reins” (Psalm 9.7)

TESTED BY INJURY 1-2

Paul’s entrance paralleled his exit from Philippi. He had been beaten and put in the stocks there – but returned kindness for injury. Again in Thessalonica the missionary group was thrust into a **"struggle"** (**AGONE**) but it was not in vain. The church emerged – and emerged strong – upheld amid persecution which tests love to the limit and tests it daily. Paul lived victoriously; he did not return insult for insult but blessing instead. In v.2 he refers to **“injury” (HUBRIS)** – an offence against the apostle which attracted the death penalty under Athenian law. This, then, highlights the quality of Paul’s grace at Philippi and gives reason why Paul should have demanded that the magistrates of Philippi conduct him from prison.

Despite the treatment at Philippi, Paul on the very first occasion dared to preach the gospel at Thessalonica. This attracted stern opposition and the cry “Those who turn the world upside down are come here also”. Paul in v3 speaks of himself as **"tested" (DOKIMAZOONTI)** or as “constantly being tested” (present tense). David said “I know that thou triest the heart” (1Chron 29.17) cf. Phil4.7, 1Sam 16.7, Psalm 19.4, 1Kgs 11.4.

WHAT A PREACHER IS NOT TO BECOME 3-4

Paul urged that he was not: –

a. **A vagabond or traveling hack** causing error of direction-with mask of ill health to win finance.

b. **A purveyor of moral filth** – Paul was a teacher of righteousness.

c. **An orator baiting** the crowds – Paul used no immodest pressure.

In v.4 Paul uses the perfect tense of “TRUST”. We **“have been entrusted with the gospel.”**

WHAT A PASTOR IS TO BECOME 5-9

“We have never been into the word of flattery as you know nor been into pretext of needing a larger share – God is witness. Neither are we looking for glory from men, from you or any others empowered as we are with the dignity of the apostles of Christ but we have become gentle in your midst as a nurse cherishes her own children so we are longing, yearning for you we were pleased not alone to give a share not alone of the gospel but part of our own souls also so deeply loved had you become to us.” Paul became positively mild toward new Christians with deep longings to share experiences and time and the way God worked in his life with them. Paul and his companions endured "toil"(KOPOS) “the poor man’s lot”- and **MOCHTHOS** “toil of mind” as he helped them learn – he laboured physically night and day so as not to be a weight or burden upon them.

THE TRILOGY OF GODLY GRACES 10

Paul was: **Holy** – free from guilt through the expiation of Christ

: **Righteous** – ordered in duties as to God and men

: **Spotless** – unblemished by criticism.

THE PASTORAL METHOD 11-12

PAUL desired each believer to “walk with God” This is the way to be “after God’s own heart”. This yields victory. To help younger believers the apostle as a spiritual father did two things: - He came alongside each individual and cheered them. He talked things over with each and protested to the individual when wrongs had to be righted.

THE DELAYS THAT PERSECUTION CREATES 15-16

Paul (himself a Jew) says the Jews fill up their sins and their treatment of the apostles – of the Lord – and their preventing of the spread of the

gospel lead to a marked delay of blessing. So Paul is really stating the principle that persecution in Macedonia and indeed anywhere is a giant hindrance to the goals of the kingdom – though zeal for Christ and **holiness** in the church was the result and valued by-product.

THE HINDERER 17-20

Paul felt bereaved of the Thessalonians. He desired to see them – but Satan hindered. Paul rejoices that the northern people "continue" (OUSON) v14 like the faithful Christians in Israel. The PAROUSIA of Christ has long awaited but the evangelical believers of Thessalonica have stood the test of time, and in that city today there is a lively church witness to the truth of the gospel and an expectant Greek Evangelical Church awaiting the master's return. The Thessalonians would be Paul's "soul-winner's crown" at the PAROUSIA or "visit" of Christ when He comes to take the bride (His church) to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTION

Jeremiah is referred to in v.4. In Jeremiah's day (Jer. 11.14) Israel's heart was tested. She had turned to Baal and refused the word of God. This great chapter tells of the divine defense of Jeremiah who came unsuspecting to Jerusalem – there to be persecuted. He committed his cause to God and God revealed the plot to his prophet – who saw the judgment of his persecutors – like an olive tree they were burned. The second scripture referred to in v.16 is Genesis 15.16 – the "iniquity of the Amorite". The filling up of sinful hardening before God ruined both the ancient Gentile inhabitants of Palestine and indeed the Jews to whom God gave the land suffered the exact same fate.

SUMMARY: THE CONTEST AGAINST PERSECUTION – A GENTLE LOVING AND SUPPORTIVE WAY OF LIFE

Paul "became" as a Father – gentle as a nurse
You "became" beloved to us
You "became" mimics of the churches in Judea

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER ANALYSIS

This chapter relays the concern of the apostle Paul confronted with two immediate calls on his person. He must ensure the young church in Thessalonica is supported and encouraged – equally he must confront the cynics and nurture the new believers – e.g. Damaris & Dionysius in Athens.

He expresses distressful “urgency” to help new Christians – which is a characteristic to be revived amongst us.

HOW TO LIGHTEN THE BURDEN OF CARE 1-2

The over laden Moses was advised to appoint elders. The old adage has it “A burden shared is a burden halved”. The burden bearer of Calvary was appreciative of Simon of Cyrene. Paul describes himself like “**a man under a leaking roof or on a ship awash**” (STEGO). Paul had learned the lesson of faith taught by Jesus when waves threatened the ship in Galilee (Mark 4.38) – he committed the Macedonians to the LORD (11-13) and he called on Timothy – who for all his gentle nature was a capable mobile “minister” and “fellow worker” (**DIAKONOS, SUNERGON**) and who could face the rugged roads north and “prop up” (STERIZO cf. Acts 18.23) the church until Paul could offer further help. The apostle describes himself as **left “like a wounded warrior” (KATALEIPHO) to recover at Athens**. This is one of the few insights we have into the heart or feelings of Paul the man.

AIMS FOR THE YOUNG CHURCH 3

Paul wants them to have support – the picture is of a wagon propped up while it awaits new use. He desires that they have the comfort of Timothy’s presence and ministry. He wants them to endure the first heat of opposition and (v.3) not to be “tossed by the waves” (**SAIO**) – here again he is leaning it seems on those stories Peter conveyed from the Master’s life & teaching. Paul added “You know by mediated explanation” (**OIDA**) i.e. from Jesus’ teaching given by Paul – that *we were appointed for these (afflictions)*.

READY FOR ANYTHING 4

Ready for the “plough or the altar” said the early Baptist evangelists. Paul "**spoke precisely**" (**PROLEGO** “**I told you**”) to the Thessalonians telling them when he was there that he was willing to face tribulations. This “being prepared” for the trouble that attends the faith is something for which believers should be initially equipped. Here we need to go back to the bible teaching that strengthened Paul cf. Mark 4.35-41 and Matthew 14 23-36.

BIG FACTORS IN ANY TRIAL 5

Paul sent to "know" (**GIGNOMAI**) their faith intimately. There is need for quite close observation to really discover how deeply faith is lodged and effective in the heart of the believer. Paul wished to know the other factor – the "method" (**POS**) of their trial. The dispatch of Timothy is presented as a campaign strategy – lest “there be a **drain** (**KENOS**) of manpower from **the city** as happened in conventional war.

TIMOTHY'S REPORT 6-7

Timothy has "**now**" or “just this moment” (**ARTI**) **arrived back**” – i.e. as Paul was writing. This word now sports the Greek “terminal iota” which Blomfield said “has never been satisfactorily explained”. Here I venture where angels dare – it is demonstrative of “a very pleasing moment”. (**EUANGELLIZO**) "**News of the faith and love – and that they always remembered Paul's 'heroism' or 'standards'**(**AGATHE**). Here it is intensely pleasurable for Paul after being beaten at Philippi and hounded from Thessalonica to hear “so swiftly" **In all our affliction and distress we have been comforted concerning you by your faith.** The fact that their faith "took the strain" of pressure and persecution served to bring the Church into Paul's forward thinking and planning. Equally encouraging was "**their desire to see** (**EPIPOTHOS**) **Paul's face again**" – with Timothy. This word for “desire” conveys the thought of “bringing floral tribute to graves from love” – it is one that deeply feels the loss of his presence. It is tragic to think within this context that Demas – a convert and helper of Paul later joined the world's side at Thessalonica (2Timothy 4.10). It is to be hoped that he avoided the company of the “lewd” fellows who first troubled Paul there.

SPRING AGAIN 8-10

It is spring again in my 'life' (ZAO) if you continue to stand in the circle of Christ. It was winter for that period just past. The spirit de vie of Paul was laced to the resilience of the believers. **"For we are able to respond with equivalent joy to that which we rejoice"** We do well like Paul to express our joy to the LORD for the joy He brings to us as Paul did. Paul said **"I have been begging God night and day to see your face and fit the things lacking in your faith"** i.e. "to fit the ship for the sea" (KATARTIZO). This is a third allusion to the Galilean scene which obviously figured more in Paul's early training of disciples than has been imagined. Paul desired to help connect up "that which was missing" in the faith of the church (HUSTEREMATA)

PRAYER – THE RESOURCE OF THE APOSTLE'S BURDENED SOUL 11-13

Prayer has been described as "breathing". If we compare the long unpunctuated prayer in Ephesians 1 with this prayer we cannot avoid the verdict that it is not a case of the apostle stumbling in grammar but rather breathing his heart out in longings to God.

1. **May God the Father "make our way straight"**

KATEUTHENEO – literally correct our way to make straight for you. The idea is that Gods "plumb-line" is needed in Paul's agenda. Amos the prophet of the plumb-line cried out "How can Israel stand for he is small?" (Amos 7.5) God is the protector and encourager of His beloved small people. He is straight to their defense – cf. *Jeshurun* "little beloved people" of Deuteronomy 33.5 & 26. God is the first defense of his people – he cares – His is "Godspeed" (**THEOS**="one who hastens") His is Fatherly care.

2. **May the Lord increase your love for one another and for all and our love for you.** This means "God make you put in higher bids for love" in the life of the church – indeed in all our lives.

3. The Lord support **your hearts in a holy or "holiness union"** (**HAGIOSUNE**) faultless – or unspotted in face of *the critic god* – *Satan* right into the future and **until the Prussia or visit of the Lord** for his church – **with all the saints**. The first thought is that the church during periods of waiting might be "supported" like a carriage till the pulling animals were linked to it – so until the Lord brings ministry to help them move in His will – until the great day

when the angels gather us and we are caught away in glory. The heart of man is “deceitful” – but God can keep it – and direct in the issues of life that it contemplates.

THE PAULINE TEACHING ON PAROUSIA – AND THE INSTIGATION OF A MIGHTY MOVEMENT PROMOTING HOLINESS

We have an interesting alliance in Pauline teaching of the “visit” of Christ (**PAROUSIA**) and “the promotion of holiness”. The reference to *Zechariah* 14.5 leads us to a vital re-appraisal of the relevance of that prophecy (Zechariah chapters 12-14) **in the context of Christian teaching** for the promotion of holiness.

1. So the visit of Him who died outside the city wall and His return visit – are aimed at earth-wide holiness.
2. Z12.2-3 Nations will “tremble again” before the Almighty – recognising God is set to defend Israel.
3. Z12.6 The governors of Judah will devour all the people to the right and to the left – victory and quick military response the order of the day.
4. Z12.9 God will seek to destroy all opposition of the nations.
5. Z12.10 Israel shall mourn for the pierced Saviour, who obviously has shown Himself – THE PAROUSIA.
6. Z13.1-7 The end of prophetic OT era and the opening of the fountain of Calvary through the smiting of the Shepherd.
7. Z7.9 The tribulation and the saving of a third of the Jews.
8. Z14.2 Jerusalem rifled and half subdued.
9. Z14.3 God fights as when Joshua conquered Canaan or Moses left Egypt – till there is ONE GOD – His name Jehovah Yeshua
10. Z14.18 Tabernacles demands holy worship of Jehovah-no rain on heathen lands becomes standard.

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER ANALYSIS

This chapter is notable for its reference to the voice of the archangel and the trump of God – the bodies of saints reconstituted for eternity and the church “caught up” in the clouds. This action is in the “air”.

There is a very great deal of consolation for those who receive this teaching of the apostle as fundamental to the Advent message – and equally debate and denial for such as maintain an eschatology that cannot accommodate the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.

THREE INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIVING

Paul's last request and exhortation is that the Thessalonians as they received from the apostle and company instructions on the Christian walk and pleasing God should intensify their adherence to these known instructions.

Paul then makes a classic statement – *This is the will of God – even your sanctification.*

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT 3-12

1. "Sanctification" (**SKEUOS**) – with especial reference to the avoidance of fornication – that each “procure for personal use and master his vessel” in holiness & honour not in violent passion of lust – stepping over the bounds (of another) or defrauding him. Paul had spoken classically and given thorough-going warning. This action sets aside the Holy Spirit given. The seriousness is the “setting aside” (**ATHETEO**) of the Holy Spirit and the treaty of relationship and in dwelling. There is no middle way – for God has not called us to a life unfit for cleansing. Un-atoned living and setting aside this command puts us in that position cf. 1Cor6.9 and Revelation 21.8

2. The second area is "brotherly love"(**PHILADELPHIA**). Of this it is superfluous to write. God taught them to love one another. They extended fraternal affection throughout northern Greece. They were urged as in v.1 “to live more to please God – so to increase in the love of men around”.

3. Yet to live quietly – this should be your ambition – mind your own affairs – as I encouraged (a general's battle strategy living independent of support and "behaving as a gentleman"(**EUSCHEMONOS**) with grace & dignity.

THE COMING OF THE LORD 13-14

There ought to be no ignorance about those who sleep (literally “are happy as those at rest in bed” or “in most intimate relationship with Christ”. This is not a reference to bodies resting RIP-style in the

cemetery. This is the spirit and soul and heavenly form of the real person.

The proposition is “If we believe Jesus died & rose – God will lead those who are intimate with Jesus in a great marriage procession of union with His resurrected Son. This we say within the circle of the very word of the Lord Jesus Himself. Cf. Matt 22.1-11 and more especially Matt 25 1-13

THE PAROUSIA 15-16

We, who are left around at the time, shall not outstrip in the race to see Jesus those who have died. Nor shall we be first to see the city – they who have died – more than conquerors will gain first sight. The famous Andrew Bonar said of Murray McCheyne that “He has gone ahead of us gaining first view of the eternal city”. The Lord himself within the mystery period of the "command" (**KELEUSMA**) will integrate the strategy as rowers are timed. They that hear the voice of the Son of God shall live. The arch-angelic "voice" (**PHONE**) – is again a battle signal for angels to gather the saints and the trumpet of God is a "military call" (**SALPIGGOS**) for now shall judgment begin and the restitution of all things proceed.

THERE SHALL BE A MEETING – ITS NATURE 17-18

Ernest Best in his commentary mentions that “representatives went out of the city to meet a dignitary”. We have, however, the combination of “rapture” and “a meeting”. The word **ARPAGE** in Greek has the meaning “robbery” “booty” or “catching away”. The “clouds” referred to have been rightly described as "clouds of men" – after Homer’s Iliad. Pindar speaks of a single hero in this way. So here one has to prefer the sense of battle and see these "clouds" as filling up with spiritual heroes of Jesus. This Latin term was first used by Jerome from the Latin **RAPIO** “to snatch away”

We shall encounter the Lord in the air. This means within sight of the world below.

Now the nature of this "encounter" (**APANTESIS**) is of special interest. The literal meaning suggests as “friend” and “adversary”.

The setting of this meeting is grand beyond words. It is aerial. We shall see the earth spread below and the church in celestial places. We shall occupy the area commanded by the prince of the power of the air. Here

the church will meet her judge – in a setting so like that of the ascension – with its vivid reminder of the great commission and the end of all that – which must inevitably usher in the kindly judgment of saints – hence the ambivalent nature of the word “MEETING”. Glorious it may be while we are walking with the LORD in the centre of His will but disturbing if we are walking in disobedience.

TWO HALVES MAKE ONE WHOLE

Think of it this way – the earlier teaching of this chapter returns to haunt or convict us if we have not lived pure and sanctified lives; if we have not lived as brothers; if we have not lived quietly to the blessing and conviction of those without.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING CONTRIBUTION

The apostle in **v5** has in view *Psalm 79.6* – “The position of those who do not know God – whose passions will come to fearful judgment – who have devoured Jacob”. *Jeremiah 10.25* is similarly in view, where the prophet acknowledges that “a man’s life is not his own – it is Gods”. So we are under divine judgment, especially those among us who will have no intimate knowledge of God and who despise the Lord and His people. *Psalm 94* is also in view – where God is called to “shine forth” in judicial splendour. Each of these contexts set the ultimate judgment scene within the straightened circumstances of an embattled Israel.

Verse 8 has in view two contexts from *Ezekiel chapters 36.27 & 37.14* which are in the apostle’s mind. The “valley of dry bones” which speaks of the suddenly birthed Israel affirms that the “breathe of God” is the answer. The horrible situation in an immoral world is that the tryst with the Spirit of God is denied and unwanted. There is no covenant and so no security against a gathering storm.

The apostle whose mind is on final nemesis and judgment has in view in **v.8** the statement of Jeremiah “When I make a new covenant with the house of Israel...I will be their God and they will be my people – I will write my laws in their hearts...none will teach his brother ‘know the Lord’ for they shall all know me” i.e. No evangelism – they shall be converted at Christ’s return. Why has there to be a judgment – because a righteous God will establish truth in the earth – bring in his kingdom & defend Jerusalem?

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER ANALYSIS

This chapter reminds us of our Lord's "thief in the night return": it speaks of the need for soldierly moral and spiritual discipline that centers on this great hope and evidences itself in the very deepest bonds of faith and love. The chapter yields 4 references the prophets and 3 to the writings of the Old Testament. It finishes with a flurry – what I have called "*a flight of arrows*" or a quiver full of instructions for the Christian soldier

TIMES AND SEASONS 1-3

Times following the word **CHRONOS** in Greek refer to ages or in the truncated usage – a lifetime; seasons by comparison tell of "the right time" "the opportune season" "the state of affairs within the cycle". There is always need to remind believers of the Lord's coming – but the word "need" carries within it "the call for an oracular response" (**CHRAOMAI**). Paul is saying "I neither can give any oracular pronouncement nor is there need beyond the Lord's word (Mt24 43-51 & Luke12 39-48. Paul is also referring to the fact that it need not be "scratched down" by his hand – since they know the gospel passages; presumably these portions of Matthew 24, Luke 12 and Mark 13 were made widely available as part of the apostle's first ministry. Peter notably reaffirms the basic truth in 2 Peter3.10 – the general epistle which would have circulated later. Paul credits the Thessalonians with accuracy in things prophetic – the term **AKRIBOS** is used by us in our word "acrobat" – speaking of balance. It was used by the Greeks in their **ACROPOLIS** – the "hill castle" or "highest point" or "defense point" of their cities. To this great refuge of hope & promise we do well to fly in these days.

A THIEF IN THE NIGHT – PEACE & SECURITY 4

The sudden elopement of true lovers and their marriage over the old Gretna forge is not discreditable – nor was "piracy" deemed heinous amongst the Greek gods. The fact is that man has stolen the property and the Lord's return to possess His own will appear like daylight robbery. The special feature of the last days is to be "peace and security" or "peace with guarantee" (**ASPHALEIA**)

Here we are faced with the stark fact as Christ taught that “the master of the house” – inescapably the supreme religious leader(s) at the rapture (whether in Israel or universal) have no “idea” of the event impending. It is “quick” – though with many previous warnings – (**AIPHNIIDOS**) the word that relates to “birth pangs”(**HODIN**).

THE DAY OF DESTRUCTION – THE “GRIP” OF MORAL DEPRAVITY GROWS

The sort of “Destruction” **OLETHROS** (v.3) of which we read here is used by Homer of the catastrophic fall of castle-cities and of poisoning. Modern depleted uranium weapons and biological weapons would provide in their widespread use such inescapable destructive havoc. Paul reassures the believers that they are not in danger of being “held down” by the darkness but “heirs” bound for the skies when Christ comes. They are not of the “shades of the underworld”.

Let us not lie down to rest in spiritual turpitude and languor, rather let’s excite ourselves and be sober and wary. All care is to be taken to have on the front & back protection or straps of “faith & love” and the “all round helmet” of our assurance in Christ as Saviour

We are not placed into wrath but into a salvation that “*compasses us round*” The idea of a **PERIPOIESIN** salvation (v.9) is one that is like fabulous resources of money i.e. savings. ...so that both here on earth and in heaven we will “live to the full” a fabulous life (**ZAO v.10**) that is continually and eternally rich. Let us bring cheer to one another and build each other up because of this – for “simultaneously” or as Paul in Romans says “now” we are drawing on the riches daily – whether in this life or more heavily in that which is to come. So let us build the house the LORD so gloriously founded by His DYING FOR US BEFOREHAND. The grasping of this “Now” is vital. It is central Christian Philosophy.

THE FLIGHT OF ARROWS (a quiver of instructions) 10-18

* Build one another centering on this one thing – “He died before & on behalf of all”

- * Let us ask that you notice the bodily needs of those who weary from toil among you, those who stand before you in the Lord and express to them extraordinary love for their sacrificial work.
 - * Sew yourselves ever more tightly together.
 - * Instruct by nouthic or mind opening nurture those who are not disciplined.
 - * Soothe or stay nearby those with little spiritual breathe; cf. Mt 14.31—the “little-faiths”.
 - * Shade (**ANTECHESTHE**) *as you would weak eyes* the weaker believers.
 - * Have feelings that linger and keep sacrificial towards others.
 - * "Observe"(**ORATE**) that nobody returns evil for evil; Paul has the Jewish concept of retribution in view.
 - * "Hunt round" (**DIOKETE**) the church to do well to another and all men, cf. *the Good Samaritan*.
 - * Always express your delight.
 - * Make your vows without ceasing – this is the daily prayer life – it relates to praying “aloud” (**AUCHEO**) as well.
 - * In everything return thanks and be winsome or charming disposition – this is Gods will or choice for you all!!
- The same Lord that puts us into his rich salvation v13 puts his wonderful nature into us v18.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS 19-28

- (1) Do not quench the spirit. Vesuvius is the mountain that lends the word **SBENNUTE**...the volcano was 4000 feet high in AD79 when Pompeii was destroyed. In 1631 many villages were destroyed-it quiesced for 7 years – then for 20-30 years it was active and in 1650’s had a paroxysmal explosion – by 1906 it was 4338 feet high. No-one can keep a lid on the glorious work of the Holy Spirit. So 7 years you may hold against God – but He will blow resistance away!!
- (2) Do not reduce prophecy – the very word **PROPHEZIA** means “that which remains assured”
- (3) Scrutinise everything – the effect is “test for purity” **DOKIZO**
- (4) Put to land at “*port noble*” or “*port seasonable*”.
- (5) Keep at a distance from evil ones or ideas – (the idea may be of sirens as in the Ulysses epic).

The God of peace make you complete – so that spirit soul & body of each and all are “watched” like sheep pastorally – physically present – mentally pure & spiritually ready when He comes. He is faithful in calling and also in inspiring such holiness.

(6) Pray or make vows in our respect.

(7) Draw all the brothers' close in a kiss of affection – which was not Judas style but one adopted from Christ.

(8) Like children read & enjoy again the epistle – the word had the power of swearing an oath-so precious is scripture whenever read – grace be yours.

Such felicitous bonds as these are ever to be sought among Christians.

THE END

Bob Coffey Aramaic & Greek Bible Companion
L'shuvkha Marya (To the glory of the Lord)