

2 Thessalonians

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

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

1:5 This is proof of God's morally perfect judgment, so that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering,⁵ **1:6** because it is indeed justifiable for God to pay back with affliction those who afflict you,⁶ **1:7** and to pay back with relief you, who are being afflicted, along with us at the revealing of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful *angelos*⁷ **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.⁸

1:9 They will experience justice—eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power,⁹ **1:10** whenever he comes in that day to be glorified among those of his who are set apart and to be marveled at among all who believe, because our testimony to you was believed,¹⁰ **1:11** for the purpose of which we also always pray for you, that our God will consider you worthy of your calling and will bring to completion every desire for godness and every work of belief by means of His power,¹¹ **1:12** so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified among you, and you will be glorified in his midst, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.¹²

2:1 We ask you, brothers, in regard to the appearing of our Lord Jesus the Messiah and our being gathered to him,¹³ **2:2** that you not be quickly shaken from your mind and become alarmed, whether by a spirit, a message, or a letter, as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come.¹⁴ **2:3** Let no one in any way deceive you, because it will not happen unless the rebellion comes first and the Man of Lawlessness, the Son of Destruction, is revealed,¹⁵ **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.¹⁶

2:5 Do you not remember that, when I was still with you, I was saying these things to you?¹⁷ **2:6** Indeed, you know what now restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his own time.¹⁸ **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.¹⁹ **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 appearance of his coming.²⁰

2:9 The lawless one's coming is according to the working of the opponent with all power, signs, and false wonders,²¹ **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.²² **2:11** On account of this, God is sending to them an energy of deception, so that

they believe falsehood,²³ 2:12 so that they all may be condemned, who do not believe the truth but instead take pleasure in evil.²⁴

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 because of your set-apart spirit and belief in the truth,²⁵ 2:14 to which He called you through our good news, in order to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.²⁶

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.²⁷

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,²⁸ 2:17 convince your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and spoken word.²⁹

3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the message of the Lord progresses rapidly and is glorified, as it also is for you,³⁰ 3:2 and that we may be rescued from absurd and evil men, because belief does not belong to everyone.³¹

3:3 However, the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard you from evil.³² 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.³³ 3:5 May the Lord guide your hearts towards love for God and perseverance in the Messiah.³⁴

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.³⁵ 3:7 You yourselves know how it is necessary to follow our example, because we did not behave irresponsibly towards you.³⁶ 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,³⁷ 3:9 not because we have no authority, but so that we could present ourselves as an example to you for you to imitate us.³⁸

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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 3:12 To such as these, we give the commandment and we encourage because of the Lord Jesus the Messiah, that they work without saying anything and eat their own bread.⁴¹

3:13 Brothers, do not lose your enthusiasm for doing good.⁴² 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.⁴³ 3:15 However, do not consider him an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.⁴⁴

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

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

¹ 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 2nd 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 give complete credit to God for the existence of the Christian community in Thessalonica.

² χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς Ὁ[ἡμῶν] καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – The two commodities which are absolutely necessary from God for a morally depraved human being to reach his ultimate goal 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.

³ 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 quite a bit of persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, it is no surprise that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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, Silvanus, and Timothy understand that the Thessalonians’ belief in God and love for one another is growing, that their understanding of God’s truth is increasing as they continue to review over and over that which Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

⁴ 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 ἠνέχεσθε – The result of what God is miraculously doing in the Thessalonians’ lives is that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 they can hold on to the value of the promise of God’s mercy and eternal life under the most extreme and difficult circumstances.

⁵ ἔνδειγμα τῆς δικαίας κρίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὸ καταξιωθῆναι ὑμᾶς τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, ὑπὲρ ἧς καὶ πάσχετε – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy view the Thessalonian Christians’ enduring belief as prime evidence and therefore proof of God’s morally perfect actions that point to His just nature, whereby He 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. Both kinds of people are part of God’s story which He is telling through the creation.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also point 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.

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 causing authentic believers to endure difficult times in order that they may develop even more mature belief and become clearly more steadfast in their commitment to the biblical truth.

⁶ εἴπερ δίκαιον παρὰ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι τοῖς θλίβουσιν 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). Therefore, it is not only right that God fulfill His promise of eternal life to those whom He has chosen, such as the Thessalonian believers, it is also right that He exercise His justice and condemnation towards those who rebel against Him all their lives.

⁷ καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ἄνεσιν μεθ’ ἡμῶν, ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ μετ’ ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ – 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” (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 harrassed 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 his “*angeloi*” who will exercise the same kind of power that he will in destroying his enemies.

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy do not make it clear to their readers exactly who are these *angeloi*. Perhaps, like the smoking oven and the flaming torch of Genesis 15, these 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, it seems clearer that these are conventional angels who inhabit another, the “heavenly,” realm and are existing creatures in the created reality just as human beings are.

In any event, they are additional created beings from what it seems is outside the earthly realm to deal with the rebellion against the Messiah within this realm, and they win the battle with Jesus for the earth.

⁸ ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, ἡ δίδοντας ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ – Jesus and his powerful “*angeloi*” will produce a destroying effect like that of fire on the earth when they 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 Jesus when he 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 will destroy this man and the army, and it sounds as though his powerful *angeloi* aid him in accomplishing this task.

⁹ οὕτως δίκην τίσουσιν ὄλεθρον αἰώνιον ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ – The end effect of Jesus’ and the angels’ destruction of his enemies who have invaded Israel will be eternal. These will be soldiers who are inwardly committed to rebelling against God. 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.

¹⁰ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ἐν πάσιν τοῖς ἰσχυροῦσιν, ὅτι ἐπιστεύθη τὸ μαρτύριον ἡμῶν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote to the Thessalonians in their 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). They also wrote that no one knows the exact day in which this will happen. Here, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are 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 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, Silvanus, and Timothy also say that this will happen because people will have believed what they have been communicating about Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. It is the effect that will become clear at Jesus’ return.

¹¹ Εἰς ὃ καὶ προσευχόμεθα πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ἀξιώσῃ τῆς κλήσεως ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πληρώσῃ πᾶσαν εὐδοκίαν ἀγαθωσύνης καὶ ἔργον πίστεως ἐν δυνάμει – On the basis of the Thessalonian Christians’ belief in the message that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy proclaimed to them, these authors pray 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, Silvanus, and Timothy 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 biblical inwardness.

¹² ὅπως ἐνδοξασθῇ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἔν 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, Silvanus, and Timothy indicate 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.

¹³ Ἐρωτώμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ' αὐτὸν – In keeping with Paul's, Silvanus', and Timothy's thinking that there is a strong possibility that the Thessalonian Christians and they will still be alive and, therefore, raised up off the earth to meet Jesus together when he returns (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18), they start this next paragraph to encourage them to hold on to the truth until they are rescued from this earth by Jesus.

¹⁴ εἰς τὸ μὴ ταχέως σαλευθῆναι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς ἤμῃς θροεῖσθαι, μήτε διὰ πνεύματος μήτε διὰ λόγου μήτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ ἑκείνου – 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, Silvanus, and Timothy 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, Silvanus, and Timothy are 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. 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, resulting in their disappearing from existence. 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.

¹⁵ Μὴ τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατήσῃ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον, ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀποστασία πρῶτον καὶ ἀποκαλυφθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἁνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας – As if the Thessalonians are not experiencing enough of mankind's rebellion against God by suffering great persecution, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy say that the way that they will be able to recognize that Jesus' return is imminent 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. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also call 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.

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 (תַּגְּמָד־בַּסֵּף) (εἰ ἐν ἀποστασίᾳ), if it was in rebellion (לְעַגְבֵּי־בַסֵּף), 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.”

¹⁶ ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρούμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενος θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἵκαθίσει ἀποδεικνύοντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός – *The rebellion will become obvious as demonstrated by one person who not only “sits in the temple of God” (literally or metaphorically?), but also claims to be God. 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.*

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 Antioches 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 Antioches.

¹⁷ Οὐ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ἔτι ἦν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ταῦτα ἔλεγον ὑμῖν – These authors now switch to the first person singular to allow the focus you be more on Paul 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, Silvanus, and Timothy wrote their 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 they 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.

¹⁸ καὶ νῦν τὸ κατέχων οἴδατε εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ – The only “thing” that makes sense in terms of what is restraining the rebellion against God from occurring is God Himself, that it is simply not yet a part of His carrying out His sovereign plans. Therefore, when God is ready and, therefore, “in [the son of lawlessness'] own time”, i.e., when it is divinely appropriate, the rebellion and this man will appear in history.

¹⁹ τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἧδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἁνομίας· 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 is clearly portrayed in the Bible as rational, along with His truth and even the ability for human beings to be able to know truthful ideas about Him. Instead, it makes more sense that “mystery” refers to something or someone that has not yet been physically revealed within God's story. Once God writes it into the story, then it is no longer a “mystery.”

Thus, because this one person, the “son of destruction,” will be revealed by God, Paul can call him and his profound

evil a mystery and say that it is already at work. In other words, the ultimate human evil and rebellion against God that this person will demonstrate is already present to some degree in the world—maybe because the world contains morally depraved human beings, who, on their own may not demonstrate outwardly the truly heinous evil that this man will do, but are still equally worthy of God’s justice and condemnation.

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). This is most reasonably a reference to God Himself, i.e., particularly God’s work within the story of the human history that promotes authentic new belief among human beings, i.e., the Holy Spirit as mentioned in other places. Paul is saying that as soon as God stops bringing about new belief in people, then it is time for, first, the most ruthless leader of all in the Middle East to arise and mistreat the Jews in Israel and, second, 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).

²⁰ 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* appears at his second coming.

²¹ οὗ ἔστιν ἡ παρουσία κατ’ ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους – The chief human rebel’s appearance corresponds to the general spirit of rebellion against God in the world because of mankind’s moral depravity. And it is accompanied by miracles and powerful actions that are copies of what God has done in human history, in order to deceive people and convince them to follow this false god.

²² καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἡ ἀδικίας ἡ τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ’ ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην ‘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.

²³ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἡρέμει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτούς 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.

²⁴ ἵνα κριθῶσιν ἡ πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες ἡ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ – God’s purposes for people’s continued rebellion is so that He may exercise His justice and eternal condemnation on them. These people are also characterized by a heartfelt pleasure in doing evil and being disobedient towards God.

²⁵ Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφειλομένον εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ ἡ κυρίου, ὅτι εἴλατο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἡ ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy switch 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, Silvanus, and Timothy refer once again to how astounded they are that the Thessalonians were granted biblical belief in Jesus as the Messiah and are even now continuing to hold on to their belief. They are so impressed with these Gentiles’ enduring belief in the face of such difficult circumstances in their city that they feel compelled again (cf. 1:3,4) to express their gratitude to God for the authenticity of their Christianity. They can also claim that God has loved them, because He chose them even before He brought the creation into existence. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy know this because of the evidence of their being different from the world and of their longstanding belief in the biblical message that they originally presented to them perhaps about a year and a half ago.

²⁶ 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, Silvanus, and Timothy are referring to everything that they have just mentioned, but probably mainly to the salvation for which God chose them in eternity past. Thus, it is to the salvation, set-apart spirit, and belief in the truth to which God has called them, i.e., 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. They also describe 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 Kingdom of God’s citizens’ high priest and king.

²⁷ Ἀρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἡς 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, Silvanus, and Timothy mention 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.

²⁸ Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ ὁ [ὁ] θεὸς ἡ ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy hope and pray 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 to it 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.

²⁹ παρακαλέσεια ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίζαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἄγαθῷ – Just as God has powerfully caused Paul and his companions to carry out their apostolic responsibilities, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

³⁰ Τὸ λοιπὸν προσεύχεσθε, ἀδελφοί, περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου τρέχη καὶ δοξάζεται καθὼς καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy know exactly what responsibility that God has assigned specifically Paul 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 they would ask their readers, who are simply living out their very typical lives in a northern Macedonian city in the 1st century Roman Empire, although now as Christians, to pray that they 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.

³¹ καὶ ἵνα ῥυσθῶμεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀτόπων καὶ πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐ γὰρ πάντων ἡ πίστις – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also want the Thessalonians to pray that God will keep them safe, even though it's probably not going to happen, from people who seek to harm them and put a stop to the spread of the message of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. They know that there is going to be fervent opposition to them, because, as they say, 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.

³² Πιστὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ κύριος, ὃς στηρίζει ὑμᾶς καὶ φυλάττει 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, Silvanus, and Timothy are 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 evil can have on a human being such that he would give up his faith and thus prove himself disqualified from eternal life.

³³ πεποίθαμεν δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ἂ παραγγέλλομεν τ' [καὶ] ποιεῖτε καὶ ποιήσετε – Paul's, Silvanus', and Timothy'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 their apostolic message by pursuing obedience to all that they have said they are morally obligated to do. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy also wholeheartedly believe that they will continue obeying their message into the future.

³⁴ Ὁ δὲ κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy appeal 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 to the eternal Kingdom of God.

³⁵ Παραγγέλλομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος καὶ μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν παρελάβοσαν παρ' ἡμῶν – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy must have heard that there were people within the Thessalonian Christian community who were 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. The result was that these people were not working for a living but, instead, relying strictly on the support of other Christians. Paul is saying in this paragraph that their behavior is completely contrary to the apostolic message, which encourages responsible work on the part of Christians to prevent their having to rely on the charity of their fellow Christians—even though the apostolic message is all about charity, grace, and mercy.

³⁶ 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), it is an apostle like Paul along with his apostolic co-workers. However, instead of doing so in Thessalonica, Paul specifically earned a living outside the Christian community and away from his actual apostolic responsibilities. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy call 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.

³⁷ οὐδὲ δωρεάν ἄρτον ἐφάγομεν παρά τινος, ἀλλ' ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ ἡμετέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα 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. One of his desires was not to place his existence in the hands of the Thessalonian Christians. He did not want them to support him and misconstrue the message of God by thinking that it involved earning something from Him. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:9ff., 1 Corinthians 9.

³⁸ οὐχ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ' ἵνα ἑαυτοὺς τύπον δῶμεν ὑμῖν εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy state their perspective on apostolic work and money. God has given them a position in this world whereby they, through Paul's unique responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles, 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 apostolic workers and their message respectively. 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. 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 that they did, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy 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.

³⁹ καὶ γὰρ ὅτε ἤμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, τοῦτο παρηγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had even made it explicit in what they had said to 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, Silvanus, and Timothy had explicitly commanded all the Thessalonians to act in a particular way, that some of them chose to disregard what they had said. Good testimony to human beings' allergy to truth and refusal to continue to think it through and adhere to its implications.

⁴⁰ Ἀκούομεν γὰρ τινὰς περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους – Somehow Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had 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, for which they deserve to be compensated financially. However, both their attitudes towards the biblical message and their work are both wrong and irrelevant to the actual truth of the message.

⁴¹ τοῖς δὲ τοιοῦτοις παραγγέλλομεν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἔν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, ἵνα μετὰ ἡσυχίας ἐργαζόμενοι τὸν ἑαυτῶν ἄρτον ἐσθίωσιν – Thus, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy repeat their commandment, and this time specifically to those who have been disobeying the same previously said commandment. And they remind them that their commandments are based upon the reality of Jesus as the Messiah and king of the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, if these Thessalonian Christians truly desire eternal life, they are morally obligated to work without drawing unnecessary attention to the fact that they are and then pay for their staying alive from what they dutifully earn—and all this outside the Christian community itself.

⁴² Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιῶντες – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy provide the corollary to what they have been talking about, that Christians rightly should have a passion and zest for doing what is right according to the apostolic message, by pursuing morality and obeying God. The implication is that if they ever lose this earnestness, God is not at work within them, and they are not authentic believers. In addition, their passion for goodness should lead them to respond positively to what they have just said about the importance of earning a living outside the Christian community and not relying on the charity of their fellow believers.

⁴³ Εἰ δὲ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ τῶν ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον σημειοῦσθε ἵνα μὴ ἑσυναμίγνησθαι αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐντραπή – Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy encourage the Thessalonians to observe carefully how people are responding to this letter, and if they are not willing to obey them as apostolic 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.

⁴⁴ καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἠγείσθε, ἀλλὰ νοθετεῖτε ὡς ἀδελφόν – In spite of the irresponsible behavior of anyone within the Thessalonian Christian community, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy would have the people of genuine faith look upon this person as a believer like themselves. This must be, for Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in hope 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, Silvanus', and Timothy'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.

⁴⁵ Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος τῆς εἰρήνης δόξῃ ὑμῖν τὴν εἰρήνην διὰ παντὸς ἐν παντὶ τρόπῳ. ὁ κύριος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul's, Silvanus', and Timothy's desire for their 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—certainly as God has promised to do, to which these authors have already referred.

⁴⁶ 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.

⁴⁷ Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν – Paul knows that it is only by God’s independent and sovereign grace because of what Jesus as the Messiah has done 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.