

# 2020-2021 Bible Study

## #15

1/12/21

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

Presented 1/5/21

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

- This letter deals with a similar issue as that in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians where Paul said, “we who alive” (**1 Thess 4:15**)
- It could lend itself to an idea that Christ would return during the time when “we” who were still alive were present
- It also could have been because Paul frequently expressed the idea that Jesus was going to return soon
- Whatever the reason, it seems as though the *Thessalonian* Christians were confused about what would happen when Jesus came, the nature of the events, and how soon it would come about

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- In response, Paul sent Timothy back to *Thessalonica* with another letter that answered that question
- When they heard it, they still asked when will Jesus be coming back?
- It would appear that they believed that it was immanent (perhaps within a year), and thus some had stopped working and began surviving off of the community (**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:6-18**)

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- Paul, therefore, wrote this second epistle to tell them:
  - That he was still working for a living as a tentmaker
  - Everyone in the community must go to work and support their families
  - Jesus is coming, but there will be certain signs that will precede his coming
  - Christians will not be surprised and will know for certain when it is about to happen
  - But, for the rest of the world, it will arrive like a thief in the night

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- He pointed out that a major sign would be the arrival of the “son of perdition” who will be a lawless man
- Father pointed out that we have no idea who that man will be, although he may come anytime between the time of Paul and the second coming of the Christ
- Unfortunately, many Protestant use these teachings, along with the Book of Revelation and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> John, to develop their eschatological mosaic
- Thus, they will often quote from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians when discussing the end of the world

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- Father reminded us that Paul spoke about the second coming of Christ and the end of the world only in these two letters
- Most likely, he did so because the Christians of Thessalonica asked questions concerning these issues
- A possibility for this confusion is because Paul was forced to flee from Thessalonica in a hurry (before he had time to cover these issues in detail)
- Most likely, this topic would be among the last things one would present when explaining the faith

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (Cont)

- These letters were designed to complete Paul's teachings
- Again, Father stressed this because modern commentators sometimes stress that this must not have been written by Paul because his other epistles do not ever deal with this topic
- We will now return to **Acts 18** and then to the **Letter to the Galatians**



# Bible Study

1/12/21

# Review of our Last Class

- At our last meeting, we began our discussion on the 13 Epistles of Paul (9 community letters and 4 personal letters)
- Both groups are arranged in the New Testament from the longest to the shortest (Romans - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians) for the community letters and the same for the personal letters
- Romans is the longest because it is to a church that Paul did not found
- Father pointed out the need to understand the context of these letters by studying the Book of Acts

# Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- We observed that Paul wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians in response to confusion on the part of members of that church over his teaching on what would happen at Jesus' second coming to those who were already dead
- When Timothy delivered this response to the church, a second problem arose over the immanent return of Jesus which caused some in the community to stop working (2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians)
- Paul emphatically explained that no one knew when this would happen so people needed to work and take care of their families

# The Epistles of Paul

<b>First Missionary Trip</b>	None			
<b>Furlough</b>	<b>Galatians</b> from Antioch Autumn AD. 51	<b>No need to follow Judaism</b>		
<b>Second Missionary Trip</b>	<b>1 Thessalonians</b> from Corinth Summer AD. 51	<b>2 Thessalonians</b> from Corinth Summer AD. 51		
<b>Third Missionary Trip</b>	<b>1 Corinthians</b> from Ephesus Spring AD. 56	<b>2 Corinthians</b> from Macedonia October AD. 56	<b>Romans</b> from Corinth Winter AD 56/57	
<b>First Imprisonment</b>	<b>Ephesians</b> from Rome Autumn AD. 60	<b>Colossians</b> from Rome Autumn AD. 61	<b>Philemon</b> from Rome Autumn AD. 61	<b>Philippians</b> from Rome Early Spring AD. 62
<b>Release</b>	<b>1 Timothy</b> from Macedonia Autumn AD. 62	<b>Titus</b> from Asia Minor Summer AD. 66		
<b>Final Imprisonment</b>	<b>2 Timothy</b> from Rome Autumn AD. 67	<b>Church order</b>		<b>17</b>

- To Kingdom of God
- To Church
- To both KG and Church
- To individuals

# Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- 50 Council of Jerusalem
- **50-51 Paul's letter to the Thessalonians**
- **54-55 Epistles to the Galatians**
- **55-58 Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians**
- **58 Paul's Epistle to the Romans**
- **60-69 Luke's Gospel completed**
- **62 Luke completes the Book Acts**
- **64-68 Christian persecution begins under Nero**
- 64-67 St Peter and St Paul martyred in Rome

# Acts 18 (Cont)

1/12/21

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:18-22** *“After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria,... he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch”*
  - At this point, Paul decided to return to Palestine by traveling from *Corinth* by boat to *Ephesus* then down to *Caesarea* (in Syria), up to *Jerusalem*, and then overland back to *Antioch*
  - This completed his **second journey**
  - Father pointed out the importance of knowing the right order of his travels in order to better understand his letters

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:23** *“After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples”*
  - Father asked that we highlight “Galatia” and “disciples” as this marks the beginning of his **third journey** (place a III there)
  - For some reason, Luke does not tell us the towns that Paul visited at the beginning of this (third) journey
  - Luke does tell us that Paul stopped to strengthen the brethren where he had previously established churches
  - So, most likely, he from Antioch (in Syria) to Derby, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia



# Acts 18 (Cont)

- These were the churches in *Asia Minor* within the region of *Galatia*
- Now, when we look at the letter to the *Galatians* we will know that it was addressed to the folks in those four churches
- Paul had, in fact, strengthened them on his second journey with the letter from the Council concerning the Judaizers heresy
- Paul did not write any letters on his first journey
- He wrote the two letters to the *Thessalonians* on his second journey

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- And, as we will see, the letters to the *Galatians*, *1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians*, and *Romans* were written on his **third journey**
- Father also pointed out how different his letters were to the Churches he founded, formed, and catechized and the letter to the church in Rome that he did not found
- The one thing Paul repeatedly told his followers not to do was circumcise their sons and practice the Jewish Law (especially the Kosher laws)
- Father reminded us that upon Paul's return from the first journey, he went to *Jerusalem* for the *Council of Jerusalem* where they resolved this issue as it related to the Gentile Christians

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- It is very important for us to fully grasp the terms of what happened here
- On his **third journey**, (53-58 AD) he will go through the region of *Galicia* again because he loved these churches, and then he moved on to *Ephesus* where he will write his to letter back to Galicia about the problems that arose while he was visiting them on this journey
- Scholars speculate as to why he did not deal with these issues while moving through the region
  - Perhaps, he was in a hurry to get to Ephesus, and did not have time to discuss the matter with them
  - Or, some of those who were governing those churches may have been teaching something other than what he taught and became hostile to him

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- Paul wrote these letters back to the churches to correct the Christians within the churches and give a little critical advice to the clergy
- Father pointed out that most likely these were not the same people he had installed on his **first journey** (45-49 AD)
- In fact, they seem to be from the “Circumcision Party,” who had come north into Asia Minor after being chased out of Jerusalem, and then *Antioch in Syria*
- Thus, they came into Paul’s churches and began teaching that one had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian

# Acts 18 (Cont)

- By this time, it would appear that Paul was no longer welcome so he decided to write his letters to correct this situation rather than deal with it in person
- The same thing will happen in the Church of *Corinth* and later in *Ephesus*
- This will mark the beginning of Paul's Third Missionary Journey
- But, first we will now look at Paul's **Letter to the Galatians** (54-58 from *Ephesus*)

# Galatians 1

# Galatians

- **Galatians 1:1-2** *“Paul an apostle –not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the father, who raised him from the dead- and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:”*
  - This section contains Paul’s argument against the false apostles who were governing the churches of *Galicia* who claimed that their authority was derived from the apostles in *Jerusalem* (as allegedly taught by Peter, James, and John)
  - As these men were known as being from the original church, they implied that their authority outranked Paul!
  - After all, Paul had not studied under Peter, James, and John, and they claimed that they knew the teaching of these apostles

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- These (false teachers) were members of the “Circumcision Party” who were forced to leave the Church in *Jerusalem* very early on
- After the council of *Jerusalem*, they traveled first to *Antioch* still teaching this idea that a Gentile Christian was a second-class member of the church
- They proposed that for one to be a first-class Christian, one had to be circumcised and keep the Kosher laws (this whole issue was discussed in Acts 10 and the Council of *Jerusalem*)
- On the other hand, Paul proclaimed that he was an apostle through Jesus Christ, and therefore outranked them
- He agreed that he did not learn the gospel in *Jerusalem*, as he was in *Tarsus* at that time, but he learned it directly from Jesus



# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- **Galatians 1:3-9** *“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,...let him be accursed”*
  - These verses (3-5) are part of Paul’s traditional thanksgiving section, but it appears that he was not very happy
  - Father pointed out that the gospel had been preached to them by Paul on his first journey
  - Then, this message was clarified by a decision of the council on his second journey
  - Now, on his third journey, Paul finds that they have adopted a very different and corrupted gospel
  - Father suggested that Paul’s original gospel was the same as that of the Apostles “repent, be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus has died and is risen from the dead and so can you”

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- That was the “good news”
- They did NOT need to be circumcised and practice Kosher, because God made no distinction based on circumcision and Kosher laws
- You can only be raised from the dead by being baptized into Christ
- All now were baptized into Christ and had put on Christ, like a new garment
- But, at this point, they have accepted a different gospel which had been corrupted by the additions that were added by the Circumcision Party

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- These folks did not deny the value of baptism, but they denied the possibility of salvation without circumcision and keeping kosher
- Paul told them that if anyone was preaching a gospel contrary to that which they received from him, let them be accursed
- The problem was existent at that moment within those churches

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- **Galatians 1:10** *“Am I now seeking the favors of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still pleasant men, I should not be a servant of Christ”*
  - One of Paul’s arguments against the teachings of the false apostles was that they were trying to please men rather than God
  - At this point, Christians were seen by the world and the Jews as a new sect of Judaism
  - This meant that you had the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and now the Nazarenes
  - They had their own synagogues and meeting places, and similar but different rituals

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- But, for many, they were seen as a heretical sect of Judaism
- This meant that the non-Christian Jews saw this new group as a threat, and therefore needed to be persecuted
- These Jews saw the basic threat as a breakdown of the distinction between Gentiles and Jews as the Nazarenes were taking Gentiles into their group without requiring them to be circumcised and keep Kosher
- This was understood by the Jews to mean that the entire fabric of society was breaking down

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- This meant that the primary persecutor of the Jewish Christians was the non-Christian Jew
- Thus, to please men, to please the non-Christian Jews, these Circumcision Party members came to the Gentile converts and demanded that they be circumcised and keep kosher
- They could say that they believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and if you don't that would be a philosophical debate, but we all want to be happy Jews
- This would please men rather than God

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- **Galatians 1:11-17** *“For I would have you know brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man’s gospel...and again I returned to Damascus”*
  - Here again, Paul is attempting to undermine the arguments of the false apostles from *Jerusalem* who were trying to use this argument against Paul
  - Paul lays out his pedigree by pointing out that he knows all the traditions of the fathers and further that God had taken him out of all of that
  - Father asked that we highlight the word “Gentiles” about ten times
  - This is what this passage is all about

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- He was preaching this gospel to the Gentiles
- He also told his listeners that after his conversion, he attended a three year retreat
- He gives this information in order to further undermine the arguments of the false apostles who said they knew better than Paul
- Paul then reminds them that he may not have gone to Jerusalem at first, but he did go there in the end, and met with the leaders of the Church



# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- **Galatians 1:18-24** *“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas,...lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain”*
  - Paul finished this passage with an oath because that was something that would have been denied by the heretics
  - Those men who were leading the churches in *Galatia* were accusing him of never having visited Jerusalem or meeting with Peter
  - Now, Paul states that he did go to Jerusalem and he did meet with Peter
  - He even stayed there for 15 days and also met with James, the Bishop of *Jerusalem* (“I swear to God”)
  - This meant that the false apostles were going to have to accuse Paul of making a false oath

# Galatians 1 (Cont)

- Furthermore, all of the Christians in Galatia knew that Paul was very pious and he would never make a false oath in the name of God
- This meant that not only had he learned the gospel directly from Jesus like the rest of the apostles, but he had gone to *Jerusalem* to confer with the apostles
- Then, he pointed out what happened when he went there as he talked about going into different areas to preach, which mainly included *Antioch*