

Paul's First Letters: Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians
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Introduction

The gospel that looks both backward and forward

Two problems in early church: (1) understanding connection with Judaism, (2) understanding the coming of Christ

Historical background: Acts 13-18

Galatians

A Missionary Manual

Three 2-chapter sections, contrasts, familiar verses

Sinai and Jerusalem

Jewish backgrounds

The history of and relationship between the churches of Galatia and Paul

Defining the gospel—What is the essence of the gospel? Paul defines the gospel by his own experience.

Importance of this question in mission work and evangelism

Artificial hurdles

Problem of overcoming one's past

Paul defines the gospel in terms of his own experience

Galatians 1-2

The importance of "getting the gospel right"

Paul's independent experience in the gospel

Paul's independent experience confirmed by the apostles

Paul's independence demonstrated by his opposition to Peter

Paul's experience provides insights for defining the gospel

Questions: How would you evaluate our evangelism and mission efforts in light of Paul's description of the gospel in Galatians 1-2?

Demands of the Gospel

Two approaches to God: the trees in the garden.

What does God want?

Galatians 3-4

Paul Argues for a “Just Right” Gospel

A series of arguments shows the consistency, practicality, and importance of the gospel of grace, always a part of the plan of God (chapters 3-4).

There are six sections: five arguments plus an illustration (allegory).

Personal experience, 3:1-5

Old Testament—Promise anticipated, 3:6-14

Law—purpose to point to the promised one, Promise confirmed, 3:15-29

New Testament—Promise realized, 4:1-11

Personal relationship, 4:12-20

Allegory, 4:21-31

Paul makes these points: the Galatians’ conversion was by faith, the promise was by faith, the purpose of the law points to the fulfilled faith, faith is demonstrated in sonship, and faith is being lived out in the relationship between Paul and the Galatians.

The allegory of 4:21-31

The connections can be set forth in a chart:

Hagar (slave)	Sarah (free)
Ishmael (origin-natural, fleshly)	Isaac (origin-promise, Spirit)
Old Covenant	New Covenant
Law	Promise/Gospel/faith/grace
Sinai, physical Jerusalem, Judaism	Jerusalem above, Christianity
Slavery and no inheritance	Sonship and inheritance

Demonstration of the Gospel

Properly define the gospel and avoid artificial and inconsistent demands—whether too tight or too loose.

Balancing Liberty and License

Christians are people who have been freed—get rid of the bars and chains; people who have faith; people who live life in the Spirit, in step with the Spirit; people who help one another, in mutuality self-supporting and self-sustaining. What counts is a new creation!

Galatians 5-6

Now that we are a new creation, Christians have to ask: “Did Anything Change?”

Paul applies the teachings

The life of liberty

(1) be free: allow others freedom, 5:1-15

(2) be spiritual: live life in the Spirit, 5:16-26

(3) be sharing: live life in the body, 6:1-10.

Conclusion: the centrality of the cross, so that what matters is a new creation.

Introduction to the Thessalonian Correspondence

Author, Date, Destination, Historical situation, Purpose

Brevity of salutation

Themes:

- Second coming (return) of Jesus
- Paul's concern for the Thessalonians
- The report brought by Timothy
- Instructions for living by faith

Is any part of the Thessalonian correspondence to be understood as apocalyptic literature?

1 Thessalonians

Models for Missions and Ministry [1 Thess 1-3]

Growing Up in the Lord [1 Thess 4-5]

Excursus: Second coming

1 Thessalonians 1

1-3, salutation

4-5, God's initiative

6-8, the Thessalonians' response

9-10, second coming

1 Thessalonians 2

1-6, defense of ministry

7-12, descriptions of ministry

13-16, results of ministry

17-20, summary of ministry, second coming

1 Thessalonians 3

1-10, historical events, close relationship of Paul and Thessalonian church (continues 2:17-20)

11-13, prayer

1 Thessalonians 4

1-12, Christian living (holiness, love, example)

13-18, second coming

1 Thessalonians 5

1-11, watchfulness regarding Day of the Lord

12-15, internal relationships

16-28, conclusion

Keys for Understanding the Thessalonian Correspondence

- Persecution, false teachers, false understandings
- Understanding part of the Thessalonian correspondence as apocalyptic literature
- Bible study guideline: understand clear, literal passages first

harpazo and related forms

→ Phil 2:6

→ Mt 11:12; 12:29; 13:19; Jn 6:15, 10:12,28,29; Ac 8:39,28:10; 2 Cor 12:2,4; **1 Th 4:17**; Jud 23, Rev 12:5

→ Mt 7:15; Lk 18:11; 1 Cor 5:10,11; 6:10

Mt 24:40,41 (paralambano, accept, receive, take along side, note parallel to Noah narrative)

Apocalyptic literature

- Associated with difficult and troublesome times, persecution, to comfort church
- Word means “revelation”, a revealing or unveiling
- Examples: sections of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Joel, certain gospel sections (e.g. Mt 24), Revelation
- Anticipates and explains future events (predictive element), often in terms of past parallels
- Symbolic language, not literal, exaggeration, seeks to explain underlying significance
- Language familiar to insiders, unfamiliar to outsiders
- To strengthen faith and give courage and hope

Second Coming

- 1 Th 4:13-18
- parousia, epiphany (Tit 2:11ff)
- “Comings of Jesus”: incarnation, kingdom (Mt 26:64, 16:28), in judgment (Rev 2-3), second coming

Day of the Lord

- OT concept, time God will come and judge (or bless), cf. Amos 5:18
- So in NT, Rom 2:5, 2 Pet 2:9; cf. day of redemption (Eph 4:30), day of God (2 Pet 3:12), day of Christ (1 Cor 1:18, Phil 1:6), last day (Jn 6:39), great day (Jud 6), et.al.
- 5:1, “times and seasons”
- To what extent do the Thessalonians (or Paul) associate the two events?

2 Thessalonians 1-3

1:3-12, literary characteristics of the first chapter, subject and application?

2:1-12

- 2:1, Coming, gathering
- 2:2, Has “day of Lord” already come?

- 2:3, Rebellion, falling away must come first (cf. 1 Tim 4:1; Mt 24:10-12)
- 2:3-4, Man of lawlessness, son of destruction (already known to Thessalonians, 2:5)

Man of lawlessness

→Opposes, exalts self above all other 'gods' (1 Cor 8:5) or worship items, Mt 24:3-5

→Caligula (A.D. 47-41) made an attempt to have his statue set up for worship in the Temple in Jerusalem. Lightfoot thinks the deification of the Roman emperor is referenced here. Wetstein notes a coin of Julius with *theos* on one side and *Thessalonikeōn* on the other.

→Temple could be reference to literal, physical temple (cf. Mt 24) or to church?

→Daniel 8, explained (8:17-26), note vv. 9-12,13

→Daniel 11, 11:31 and Mt 24:15, 11:36ff (cf. NIV study notes and Mangano, Daniel, pp. 299-300)

→First century application? Kelcy: certain emperor, papacy or Roman church, Babylonian mythology, Satan himself, principle of evil

- 2:6-7, the mystery (unrevealed) or lawlessness was at work in Paul's time, but the coming rebellion and revelation of man of lawlessness were still future. Cf. Rev 17:7. [Warfield suggests that the man of lawlessness is imperial Rome with its desire for deification and that the Jewish state is the restraining power.]
- 2:8-10, then lawlessness will be fully revealed, fully aligned with and the work of Satan, but overcome by Jesus, deceiving many. [Mt 24; Rev 13, 19:11-21; 20:1-4]
- 2:11-12, the nature of the deception
- 3:1-18, various exhortations