

October 16-22, 2023

1 and 2 Thessalonians

“PERFECT THAT WHICH IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH”

Summary: *1 Thessalonians 1. The gospel comes both in word and in power.*

1 Thessalonians 2. True ministers preach in a godly manner—Converts are the glory and joy of missionaries.

1 Thessalonians 3. The Saints are told to perfect that which is lacking in their faith.

1 Thessalonians 4. The Saints are told to be holy, sanctify themselves, and love one another—The Lord will come, and the dead will rise.

1 Thessalonians 5. The Saints will know the season of the Second Coming of Christ—Live the way Saints should live—Rejoice evermore—Do not despise prophesyings.

2 Thessalonians 1. At His Second Coming, the Lord Jesus will take vengeance upon the ungodly.

2 Thessalonians 2. Apostasy is to precede the Second Coming—The gospel prepares men for eternal glory.

2 Thessalonians 3. Pray for the triumph of the gospel cause—Paul preaches the gospel of work—Be not weary in well-doing.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What were the functions of meeting houses?

A look at Jewish life at the time of the

early Saints helps to understand the setting of many chapters. The temple of Jerusalem and the priestly government in Jerusalem were no longer the focal point of worship. Synagogues were becoming more autonomous centers of local leadership and community discussion, as well as worship centers. The common term “synagogue” comes from the Greek language. It means “meeting house,” *Bet Kneset*, in Hebrew. Meeting houses existed before the second temple was destroyed, although there were few of them that have been uncovered archaeologically. Several synagogues were mentioned in Jesus’ ministry. After the Temple was destroyed, many synagogues were built. Their construction was similar to previous synagogues in that they had three meeting areas. The outer area was for the congregation, usually divided into two parts or two sides,

one for women and one for men. The second part had a “*Bimah*” (usually a raised platform) with a table for Torah scroll as it was being read. The third part of the meeting house contained the ark that held the sacred scrolls. The ark was usually decorated with a “sun stone” or sunburst design above it and had a curtain (veil) that had to be parted as the scroll was retrieved. The “*Bimah*” (stage/pulpit) sometimes had moon decorations around it. The congregational area had stars decorating it. The Temple had similar decorations of sun, moon and stars. Modern temples still do.

What was the transition of Temple meeting to meeting houses?

“In the first century C.E., the synagogue emerged as a firmly established institution. It is mentioned in all literary sources of that period, from various parts of the world. When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., many of the rituals formerly conducted there were transferred to the synagogue, and organized prayer became the substitute

for sacrifice. The sages referred to the synagogue as *mikdash me'at* ("little temple"), viewing it as a miniature Temple where Jewish congregations all over the world could gather and, to some extent, fill the void left by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem." "The remains of numerous synagogues dating back to the first few centuries of the Common Era have been uncovered, attesting to the widespread acceptance of the institution at that time." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) It was in many of these synagogues that fervent discussions ensued about the future of Jewish worship now that the temple had been destroyed and the priestly cast had become so divided and fraught with wickedness. Various executions and death attempts had been planned for believers in Jesus of Nazareth.

How did meeting house use expand into use of letters?

The true believers in the restoration of ancient covenants as preached and administered by the Twelve and the Seventy grew in multitudes well beyond the borders of Israel. Many non-Jews also felt the true spirit and believed. Their conversions bothered some of the Jews because the Jews wanted to hold on to past customs and social traditions. Soon, the growth of the Church became an even greater threat for the Jewish community leaders. "And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath," (**Luke 4:28**) Another part of Jewish life included writing letters to various congregations or synagogues when personal visits were too difficult. "The letter holds an honored place in Jewish history and literature. Since the form includes earliest diplomatic and state correspondence, business and private mail, discussions and arguments between communities on local or religious questions, polemics and controversial issues, letters have also provided for

scholarly research. Letters were often written to leading rabbis on questions of Jewish law, a practice that prevails even today. Collections of the answers, authoritative rabbinic opinions, are in a body of literature called Responsa). Jewish letters were written mainly in Hebrew, even after Jews adopted the languages of the countries of their exile. Hebrew was the language common to all Jews and remained the vehicle of all scholarly communication. The form of the letters included the date in Hebrew and the *sedra* (order) of the coming week. At a later stage, Yiddish occupied a similar position for European Jews." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What did scribes do?

"Writing usually required a professional to execute it. In ancient times a royal court officer, the *sofer* (scribe), was undoubtedly the letter-writer as well. The professional letter-writer was an important post even into the 20th century. Seals which were used to sign and close the documents of antiquity as well as letters, are displayed in the Israel Museum, and in other collections. Throughout the Middle Ages letters served as a major Jewish literary form. They were widely used as a means of publishing the writers' statements and views and were not necessarily private communications. They were delivered by a messenger whose errand was often interrupted on the journey so that the letter could be read to the public. Messages of importance were copied for reference and often read aloud in the synagogue or other gathering place." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) The truth as it was being taught by the Lord's chosen added to the rich culture and tradition that many people still followed. Truth always builds rather than destroys. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, God revealed a three-point standard by which truth is recognizable. "Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth,

understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.” (Doctrines and Covenants 50:22-24) “Being truthful is one of the most important virtues that a person can possess. In the Bible God is described as the "God of Truth" and truth is one of the 13 divine attributes. The rabbis taught that "truth has feet," i.e., is well founded and will endure. A sign of this was found in the very word itself. The Hebrew word for truth is *emet*; the first letter of the word is the first letter of the alphabet, the second is the middle letter of the alphabet and the last is the last letter of the alphabet. Thus, the three "feet" of truth are spread out and form a solid base. The Hebrew word for falsehood, however, is *sheker*, which is formed from the three letters of the alphabet before the last letter. The letters are not in their alphabetical order and represent feet which are too close together and not properly fixed. Falsehood has no foundation and will not last.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How do I prepare to embrace truth?

It is important to realize and remember that many are prepared before they embrace the truth. In their best efforts and faith, they respond to the Spirit that directs the open-hearted. They need not reject their former teachings. Yet, making corrections when needed and building upon the truths they already perceive, these faithful people are edified. In former days and in the latter-days, so were the Churches built in the faith. The greatest difference in the times after Jesus' atonement is that all can have access to the gift of the Holy Ghost. “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what

manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:” (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6)

How many of the following actions do I observe?

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-28)

How was apostasy experienced in Old Testament times?

Apostasy was at Mt. Sinai; when the Israelites worshipped the golden calf, exasperated with Moses' non-return. (Exodus 32:1-6) Apostasy was at Shittim; when the Israelites worshipped the Gods of Baal at Peor. (Numbers 25:1-5) Israel went through apostasy during the period of the judges. (Judges 2:11-13) Micah and his family committed theft and set up idols. (Judges 17:1-6) King Solomon allowed his wives to mislead him by committing to idol worship and marrying outside the covenant people. (1 Kings 11:1) (1 Kings 11:5-7) (1 Kings 11:1-8) King

Jeroboam founded a new religion: and the encouraged the worship of the two golden calves. (1 Kings 12:31) (1 Kings 12:25-33)
King Joash as an older man forsook the Lord and served idols (2 Chronicles 24:17-19) King Amaziah's idolatry brought in the

gods of Seir and set them up as his gods. (2 Chronicles 25:14-16) King Ahaz practiced idolatry. (2 Chronicles 28:1-4) King Manasseh practiced idolatry. (2 Chronicles 33:1-9)