

The  
New  
Testament  
in a Year

---

Week 12

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4-James 1

Unfortunately, there are no daily reflections for this week.

Instead, I've copied some material from Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's How to Read the Bible Book by Book (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2002).

This is an excellent pocket-book sized resource that takes you through each book of the Bible. I recommend it as a useful reference to have on your shelf.

*I've also included some of my own comments, which are in italics.*

Greg Smith-Young  
NT in a Year editor

Monday

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4-5

*Oops. When I was putting together the reading schedule for the year, I somehow didn't notice that 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians has 5 chapters. So there are 2 chapters for today*

*Last week we moved on to Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Thessalonians, which is his earliest writing in the Bible, and perhaps the earliest chronologically in the New Testament.*

(From Fee and Stuart's book)

Paul is writing to new converts to Christ. In these two chapters, he takes up matters that have been reported to him by Timothy. Most of them are reminders of instructions they had been given when Paul and his companions were among them – about sexual immorality; mutual love, which includes working for one's own sustenance; and the return of Christ. One altogether new item is also included, namely, what happens to believers who have died before the coming [return] of Christ.

Tuesday

2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1

(From Fee and Stuart's book)

Orienting Data for 2 Thessalonians

Content: a letter of further encouragement in the face of suffering, of warning against being misled regarding the coming of the Lord, and of exhortation for some to work with their own hands and not sponge off others.

Date: AD 51 (probably), very shortly after 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians (although some would reverse the order of our two letters)

Occasion: Paul has received word that some (probably by prophetic word) have spoken in Paul's name to the effect that the day of the Lord (= the coming of Christ) has already taken place. Also, that the disruptive loafers spoken to in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians have not mended their ways.

Emphasis: the sure salvation of the Thessalonian believers and the sure judgement of their persecutors; the day of the Lord is still ahead and will be preceded by "the rebellion"; those who are idle and disruptive should work for their food.

Wednesday

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2**

(From Fee and Stuart's book)

2:1-12 – Correcting Errors about Christ's Coming: Paul begins the body of the letter by urging them not to be shaken by erroneous teaching (even though he is not quite sure of its source). As you read Paul's response, note first that he reminds them of his earlier instruction on this matter to the effect that certain events must precede the coming of the Lord. Second, note how the "man of lawlessness" mentioned in v.3 is the central figure in the whole narrative. A great rebellion will accompany his appearance, effected in part by satanic miracles that dupe those who refuse to embrace the truth, but in the end he will be destroyed by Christ himself at Christ's coming.

2:13-17 – Application and Prayer

Paul next encourages them by immediately setting them – those who have believed the truth and received the Spirit – in contrast to those mentioned in vv. 10-12. He then urges them to stand firm in their former instruction, finally praying both for their encouragement and their continuing faithfulness to Christian life and teaching.

Thursday

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3**

(From Fee and Stuart's book)

3:1-5 – Request for Prayer

Friendship in antiquity required reciprocity; thus, having prayed for them in their present circumstances, he asks them to pray for him in his.

3:6-15 – Those Idle and Disruptive

Before reading this section, you might wish to reread 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:9-12. In returning to this matter, Paul uses himself as an example. He urges the disruptive-idle to work with their own hands so as not to burden anyone. Next, he tells the church what they are to do, namely, dissociate from those who refuse to obey. However, always think of them as brothers and sisters, not as enemies.

3:16-18 – Concluding matters

After passing the peace, Paul takes quill in hand to sign off, before the final grace-benediction.

This letter fits into the biblical narrative as part of God's reassuring his people that Christ alone holds the key to the future. We can trust him. In the meantime, love for one another also means not to impose on others' kindness.

Friday

**James 1**

*Though the authorship of this letter is disputed, the most ancient traditions say it was written by the "James" who was Jesus's brother and a leader in the early church (see Acts 15). Which is remarkable, since evidence suggests James and the rest of Jesus's family didn't "get" him during his pre-crucifixion ministry. His resurrection seems to have changed this!*

(adapted from Fee and Stuart's book)

Orienting Data for James

Content: short moral essays, emphasizing endurance in hardship and responsible Christian living, and special concern that believers practice what they preach and live in harmony.

Date: anywhere from the mid-40s AD to the 90s, depends on who wrote it. If it was James, Jesus's brother, it would have been earlier rather than later.

Recipients: believers in Christ who were Jewish, yet living outside of Judea

Occasion: unknown, though it shows concern for real conditions in the churches, including severe trials, dissensions caused by angry and judgmental words, and abuse of the poor by the wealthy.