

*A Study
on the
First Epistle
to the
Thessalonians*

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Bible Study Guides for the New Testament

From the John A. Dickson New Analytical Bible

Writing a book was not on my mind when this effort was initiated some years ago. In fact, it began when a member of my Sunday School class commented that his son had talked about committing suicide the previous week. As a result, I felt an urge to see what the Bible had to say about hope, with a view toward helping his son cope with his suicidal feelings. The result of that effort was an article entitled: “Hope and the Miraculous Three Pound Computer,” located in Chapter 6 of the book [After the Big Bang](#). My next writing endeavor was a fallout from a Sunday School class discussion about temptations, or trials, and their purpose in our lives. An article entitled “The Trials of Job” located in Chapter 7 of the same book resulted from that effort. After this I began to feel a prodding from the Lord to continue studying and writing. The chapters in this book document what I subsequently learned about two of God’s greatest and most marvelous creations: earth and mankind, who He made to exercise dominion over it.

Some of the material presented in these New Testament Bible Study Guides conflicts with commonly held viewpoints, and differs as well on the definitions of some words used to explicate them. One thing I have learned through this effort is that the meaning of many of the words used in the Bible is not uniformly agreed to by expositors, and in many cases, not agreed to by the various versions of the Bible. For example, in the KJV of the old testament (OT), the word “soul” is used over 780 times. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words notes that in over 400 of these uses, the Hebrew word used is misinterpreted. I mention this not to heap criticism on the KJV, for it is my personal Bible, and I love it dearly, but to point out the importance of consulting Hebrew and Greek sources, and good conservative lexicons, when trying to understand difficult scripture. The meaning of some words is not absolutely clear even then. Nevertheless, this is the process I have followed in this effort.

I am a retired engineer: my education and work experience sparked a great interest in details. I found that to understand the technical difficulties and problems that arise in the operation of complex machines, a good understanding of the details of the design is absolutely necessary. What is

presented herein is an analysis of important details in God's creation of the earth and man: his habitat and milieu. However, no description is completely adequate to portray the unbelievable complexity and efficacy of tripartite man. Scientists and engineers have tried to duplicate the various subsystems in God's design of man for years, with limited success. Part of the problem is that we do not understand many of the operational details, but the greatest impediment is probably the fact that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body, two of which (spirit and soul) are immaterial, and are thus largely beyond the scope of scientific and medical analysis. The third part, the highly complex body, is strongly influenced by these two immaterial parts. God has given mankind a great challenge in trying to understand tripartite man. What better model could we find for our study than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: spirit, soul and body in perfect relationship. When Jesus came to earth He emptied Himself, and was formed in the likeness and fashion of a man. Like us, He was a tripartite being, but without a sin nature. Thus, He was the perfect man, the ideal for all to emulate.

I read a book several years ago by Watchman Nee in which he made the observation that one of the primary ways God speaks to us is through our

intuition. After that I began to try to follow the guidance I received in this manner, and what is presented herein is largely a result of that attempt. I hasten to add that all readers will not agree with my conclusions. I have learned much about God's creation, and His design of man through this effort: that may be the primary purpose He had in mind. My hope is that readers will find new ideas in these words that drive them to the absolute authority: God's Word - the Bible.

As references I have used the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Revised Version (RV), and Recovery Versions of the bible, as well as the Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English Old Testament (OT), and the Interlinear Greek - English New Testament (GNT). I have also used Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon, the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, and Webster's New World Dictionary for word interpretation. Unless otherwise noted, scripture passages quoted are from the KJV.

The John A. Dickson New Analytical Bible and Dictionary, Authorized King James Version, Chicago 1950, was a primary reference source. This Bible was given to my wife and I in 1957, and is one of my dearest treasures. It has been rebound once, and is in need of a repair job at the present time. Thus, the reader can appreciate the usage it has had over these 62 years, most of which has been during the last 25 years. The book introductions have been generally quoted from this source, with changes (mostly grammatical) made only when considered necessary.

Finally, I want to recognize the lady that takes everything I have written, and makes the necessary changes for placing it on the internet. Ms. Sandra Crosnoe is the daughter of two of my, and my deceased wife's, dearest friends, Ted and Jimmie Crosnoe (also deceased). When God moved us (my wife and I), to a Methodist Church in Pasadena, Texas, in 1962, Ted, Jimmie, and their two daughters were among the group of several families in the church that were touched by God in a mighty way that led to a weekly Bible study, that resulted in many changed lives. As the years passed by, and the families went in different directions, we were not able to maintain the close relationship we had in Pasadena. We settled in Lubbock, Texas, in 1982, and I got the call to start

writing on the Bible. Sometime after that Sandra was in Lubbock and we got together for dinner. When she learned of my involvement in writing on the Bible she immediately volunteered to help in making it available by publishing it on the internet. She may not have known what she was getting into, for God has not ceased from giving me Bible subjects to study and write about. This series on the New Testament has been our greatest undertaking, and Sandra's help (as always) has been essential. She has corrected my grammar, argued with me on interpretation, prepared the pictorial cover pages, and generally polished the appearance of the various books in ways that I could never have accomplished on my own. Without her help, this (and other) documents would never have been made available to the general public. I do so appreciate all her work. I believe Ted and Jimmie will give her a "well done" when she joins them in heaven. Her personal website is [Finding Gems and Sharing Them](#).

These bible study guides are available at no charge to read, print, download and share on a platform called Scribd (no membership is required to read/download). They are all listed and linked as a group in [Bible Study Guides by Jesse C. Jones on Scribd](#). Upon completion, most of them will contain study

questions in the Appendix. Other works available are listed and linked with [Books for Believers and Seekers](#). If you hit a pop-up page on Scribd asking you to become a member to read free, simply click the 'x' in the upper right corner to remove the pop-up and continue to our links on Scribd. My personal website is [Revealed by Fire - Jesse's Studies](#) if you wish to see my latest articles and updates.

It is my sincere hope that these works will guide you to a personal ongoing relationship with Jesus and a life led and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

JESSE JONES

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians

Paul came from Philippi to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. This city, formerly called Therme, was rebuilt by Cassander, who named it in honor of his wife, Thessalonice, a half-sister of Alexander the Great.

In company with Silas and Timothy, Paul founded this church. He first appealed to the Jews, but after three Sabbaths was not allowed to enter the Synagogue. Among the Greeks his preaching had great success. The envy of the Jews was aroused and Paul was compelled to go to Berea, where he was received by people with open minds, who readily received the word. But when the Jews from Thessalonica heard of Paul's success in Berea they came and stirred up the Jews in Berea and forced Paul to leave for Athens, and from there to Corinth.

While he proceeded to Corinth he sent Timothy to ascertain the condition in this new church. He joined Paul in Corinth and reported the steadfastness of the faith of these believers, but that they were disturbed, and were laboring under mistaken ideas relative to the Second Coming of Christ. They were under the impression that this great event was soon to occur and raised the

question, what about those who had died having a part in His glorious coming and kingdom?

To set their at minds at rest on this point Paul wrote this first letter. It was the first of thirteen epistles written in 52 or 53 AD, or about eighteen years after his conversion. It was written at Corinth where Paul spent eighteen months.

Paul Greets the Church at Thessalonica

Paul, Silas, and Timothy send greetings to the church at Thessalonica in the name of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace and peace to you. We give thanks to God concerning you and make mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love, and the patience of hope our Lord has brought about in you, knowing beloved brethren your election by God. For our gospel came not unto you by word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; for you know what manner of men we were. You became followers of us, and of the Lord, with joy in the Holy Spirit, even though you were going through severe affliction. You were examples, not only to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, but everywhere your faith in God has gone out people keep telling us how you turned from idols and unto the Lord to serve the true God, and Jesus His Son, whom He raised from the dead to appear in a cloud to rescue us from the impending fury of God's judgment.

How The Gospel Was Preached and Received

Our visit to you was not in vain. But having suffered, and having been insulted at Philippi, we were bold in our God to preach the gospel in much agony. For our exhortation was not in error, nor of uncleanness, and not in guile. But we have been equipped and entrusted to preach the gospel, not to please men, but God, who tries our heart. We did not use flattery, nor a pretext of covetousness, as God is our witness. We did not seek glory from you, nor of others, when we might have been burdensome, but we were gentle even as a nurse cares for her children. We were pleased to impart the gospel of God, as well as that of our own souls because you have become beloved to us. For brothers, you remember our labor and travail: laboring night and day so that we would not be a burden to you. And you know how we exhorted, comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does to his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory.

For this cause we thank God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth,

the word of God, which works in all you that have believed. For you became followers of God, as the churches in Judaea that have suffered similarly from the Jews, that have killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have driven us out, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles in their midst. They do not please God, and are contrary to all men. God's wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. We have been taken away from you for a short time: not in heart, for we endeavor to see your face with great desire. Our hope and joy and crown of rejoicing is the knowledge that you will be in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming.

Paul Sends Timothy to Thessalonica

Paul longed for knowledge about the Thessalonians, so he sent Timothy to encourage them regarding their faith. He stayed behind in Athens because of the tumult that arose among the Jews during his first visit. When Timothy returned he brought good tidings about their love and faith, and their longing to see Paul again, and he tells them about his great desire to see them and to perfect anything lacking in their faith.

He closes this chapter asking God to direct their way back to visit them, and praying that their love toward one another would continue to grow, and their hearts would be blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rapture (Parousia) of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

This chapter opens with Paul exhorting the Thessalonians as to how they must live to please God, and abound more in their walk with Him. He reminds them about the injunctions they were given through the Lord, and the fact that it is God's will that they be sanctified so they will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Sanctification is defined as making the body pure, free from sin. (1) - see Appendix for more on holiness/sanctification.

Paul warns that every one of them should know how to possess their vessel (body) in sanctification and honor, and not in passion and lust. God did not call us to uncleanness, but purity. Therefore, if one of you rejects this teaching he does not reject man, but God.

Concerning love for your brethren, we do not need to write you for you have been taught by God to love each other; and you show your love for all the brothers throughout Macedonia. We encourage you in this. Study to be quiet, and take care of your own business. Work with your own hands and earn your living through your own efforts, and thus, earn the respect of outsiders.

Finally, we need to address your concerns about what happens to the dead when Christ returns. Matthew 24:27-31 describes the coming of the Son of man (the Lord) in the clouds for His elect: *“For as lightening cometh out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase (dead body) is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with the sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

This passage seems to clearly show that the rapture comes following signs in the heavens that occur at the end of the Great Tribulation. Matthew 24:28 is a verse that has received widely divergent interpretations, but to read it in context seems to indicate that it refers to the resurrected bodies of believers (carcass, or dead body) meeting and joining with those (spirit/souls) that accompany the Lord when He comes in the clouds.

The last five verses of Thessalonians Chapter 4 address the question about what happens to the dead.

Verse 4:14: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*

To explain this verse I believe it is necessary to start with a description of the image of man as referred to in Genesis 1:26-27. Genesis 1:26 says, “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .*”. The Hebrew word “*elohim*” interpreted “*God*” in these two verses represents the plurality of identities in the Trinity of the godhead (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament by Harris, et. al.). Thus, we know that the image referred to is one that manifests the three separate entities of the triune Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit. We conclude from this that man is a tripartite being for we are created in the image of the triune God. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 confirms this when it says that man consists of three entities: soul, body, and spirit. Thus, the tripartite image into which man was formed includes, 1) man’s soul, which embodies the image of the Father; 2) man’s body, which embodies the image of the Son; and 3) man’s human spirit, which embodies the image of the Holy Spirit. In contrast to man’s body, his human spirit and soul owe their existence to the direct creative power of God. According to Hodge’s “Systematic

Theology,” the common doctrine of the church has ever been that the soul of a newborn is not generated nor derived from the parents, but is created by the immediate agency of God. God uses no physical processes in the formation of the soul and spirit: both are immaterial. Several scriptures refer to the fact that God made man’s spirit: Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Zechariah 12:1 state that God “*gave*” and “*formed*” man’s spirit, and Ecclesiastes adds that man’s spirit returns to “*God who gave it,*” at physical death. We understand from Matthew 10:28 and Revelation 6:9, that our soul accompanies our spirit to heaven (or hell) at physical death. Job 12:10 indicates that man’s soul and spirit are in the hand of God, and Job 34:14 states that God can gather unto himself man’s spirit and breath (life/soul). The thinking in the old testament (OT) was that man consisted of only two parts (the inner man, and the outer man), with the inner man performing the functions of the spirit and soul. The new testament (NT) seems to consider the spirit and soul as separate identities, but possibly joined and inseparable, except by the word of God (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible indicates the soul can be separated from the body, but it does not appear to be capable of separation from the spirit. Galatians 5:17 says that the Spirit is at war with the flesh (biblical heart), keeping us from doing the things we would.

We see from this that those Jesus brings with Him in the clouds (identified as eagles in Matthew 24: 28), in this verse are the spirit/souls of those believers whose physical bodies have died previously. They have been with Him in heaven since their earthly death waiting to be called to join Him when He returns in the clouds.

Verse 4:15: *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

Those believers still alive when Christ returns will follow those that are dead in joining Christ in the clouds. They will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Verse 4:16: *For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*

This will be an event that is announced by the last (seventh) trumpet, a shout, and the voice of an archangel. This is a celebration of an event bringing to a close God's plan to populate heaven with those He chose before the foundation of the world, and it will be noisy.

Verse 4:17: *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

As the changed body, spirit, and soul of those that were still alive join those that were dead (who join with their spirit and soul in the clouds), the newly formed spiritual bodies are once again tripartite: sinless body, soul, and spirit, and they will be with the Lord forever.

The Lord's Second Coming

As to the timing of the Lord's return I don't need to write to you. For you know well that the Lord will come like a thief in the night, at a time when He is least expected, when life is just as it always is. Then sudden destruction will come, and it will be painful, like the travail of a woman giving birth. But you are not in darkness for you are children of the light. Let us not sleep, as some do, but rather let us watch and be alert, wearing our breastplate of faith and love, and our helmet of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to salvation, through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another, as you have been doing. Be sure to get to know those that labor with you, and over you in the Lord, and honor them for the work they do. We exhort you brethren, warn them that are disorderly, comfort the feeble minded, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient toward all. See that none render evil for evil unto any one, but always follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men. *“Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench*

not the Spirit, despise not prophesying, prove all things, hold fast to 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.”*

(1) Holiness (the Sanctification)

This section is reprinted from the book: “The Path To Holiness” by Jesse C. Jones. The book currently has limited availability to purchase.

“Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Leviticus 19:2

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness [the sanctification], without which no man shall see the Lord.”

Hebrews 12:14

Introduction

The Hebrew word interpreted “*sanctify*” in the OT is the word “*qadash*”, which means “be hallowed, holy, sanctified, to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate” (“Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament”, by R. Laird Harris, et. al.). Harris goes on to point out that this word occurs in several dialects of Akkadian with the basic meaning “to be clean, pure, consecrated.” In Canaanite texts the basic meaning is “holy”. Harris concludes that the Hebrew

root word “*qdash*”(*qadash*) serves to define the sphere of the holy. The Greek word interpreted as “*sanctify*” in the NT is the word “*bagiazo*”, which means to “make holy, sanctify, consecrate” (“Mounce’s Complete Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words”). Mounce adds that this verb expresses the action of including a person or a thing in the sphere of what is holy. Thus, we see that the Biblical meaning of the word sanctify (or sanctification) as related to the new covenant is the process whereby believers into Jesus Christ are made holy: conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Many scriptures in the Bible attest to the holiness of God. Here are a few: Exodus 3:1-6, 15:11; 1 Samuel. 2:2; Psalm 99:1-9; Isaiah 6:1-8; Revelation 4:1-11.

The event in the Bible that seems to best depict the great importance and surrounding glory that God attaches to His holiness is documented in the Book of Numbers. Chapters 16 and 17 record an event that occurred during the wanderings of the Israelites, after their exodus from Egypt. Some of the congregation, led by a man named Korah, rebelled against Moses’ and Aaron’s leadership, saying “*Ye take too much on upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?*” These rebels, 250 of which were princes of the tribes that had been given authority to serve within the Tabernacle, considered themselves to be

just as holy as Moses and Aaron. The Lord told Moses to have these 250 men to fill their censers with fire from the altar, and be prepared to offer incense before the Lord on the following day: God would then make it clear who was holy and who was not. When they gathered the next day God was so wroth with the congregation that He was prepared to consume all of them, but Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and pleaded with God, saying, *“shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?”* God apparently relented and Moses then addressed the congregation: *“Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, . . . then the Lord hath not sent me.”* God then destroyed the ringleaders of the rebellion by opening a chasm in the earth that swallowed up all their families, houses, and goods. He then sent fire that consumed the 250 princes that claimed holiness equal to that of Moses and Aaron. The censers of these 250 princes had previously been sanctified by the Lord, so they were used to make covers (plates) for the altar as a reminder to the Israelites that only God can sanctify. They failed to realize that man cannot make himself holy: only God is holy and only He can perform works that are holy through a man’s body.

This passage of scripture gives us some idea as to the importance of holiness to God, and how He guards and protects it against false claims. God has not changed during the 3,000+ years that have passed since this event occurred (Malachi 3:6). He guards and protects his holiness today in the same way He did in dealing with the Israelites in ~1,500 BC. Believers into Jesus Christ must be extremely sensitive to this, for we have God's holiness within us in the person of the Holy Spirit. Whether God's holiness is manifested through our bodies, or not, is the subject we will pursue in the remainder of this writing.

The Pitiful Condition of Mankind

The sinful condition of unredeemed man is abundantly attested to in the Bible. In Genesis 6:5, God laments that He has created man: *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* Because of this, God comments a few verses later that He will destroy man from the face of the earth, and this He did in 2348 BC (according to Ussher). God has an absolute and total hatred of sin and evil, for it was introduced by His arch-enemy Satan, wrapped in an enticing package, and sold to Adam through his wife Eve. Satan seemingly knew God's ultimate plan for man from the outset, for he knew just how to frustrate it: get

man to regard evil in his heart. It is not exactly clear to me how the flood was going to correct the worldwide corruption of mankind that Satan engineered, since God repopulated the cleansed earth with Noah's family, men from the old Antediluvian age, who supposedly still had a sin nature. However, Noah was a member of the Sethite (Messianic) line, through which God planned to send His only Son into the world to provide a perfect sacrifice for man's sins so that they could be made holy and acceptable to join Him in eternity.

The flood did not eliminate evil from the world, and that is clearly evident from many scriptures the Bible. To mention just a few, Jeremiah 17:9 states that *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Psalm 14:2-3 says, *"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* Romans 8:7-8 says, *"Because the carnal mind [mind of the flesh] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."* Ephesians 2:2-3 says, *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation [lived] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and*

were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” God was not surprised that the flood didn’t turn out to be the final solution to the sin problem. Over the following centuries He made several other attempts to draw mankind back from sin. He chose a people (the Israelites) for His own, and gave them godly judges, kings, priests, and prophets, but they consistently returned to sin. Even when God drew them back through chastisement, they invariably returned to their old ways. ² Peter 2:22 recognizes this characteristic of mankind: *“The dog is returned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”* Often, the very leaders God appointed led the way in the worship of other gods, as well as in other sinful acts. Even king David, a man after God’s own heart, committed adultery, and then ordered a murder to cover it up. As good a man as David was, he was drawn away by his own lust which led to sin, and ultimately to death, just as recorded in James 1:15. God knew the only way He could get men to reject worldly pleasures, and instead turn to the love of Christ and be filled with the fulness of God (Ephesians 3:19), was to send His Son into the world to provide a spotless blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins; send His Holy Spirit into the body of man to spread holiness, guidance, and direction; and to appoint the resurrected Christ as Mediator of this “new covenant” to insure that those the Father gave Him remained holy to

the end of their lives on earth. This is what God the Father set out to do: make a way for the reconciliation of mankind to Himself.

God's Corrective Plan

The steps in God's plan to achieve this goal are discussed in depth in the NT, but the most complete and concise list is given in the OT, in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Our purpose in this chapter is to understand sanctification, so we will merely list the steps leading up to it, and focus our discussion on the final step in God's plan of salvation.

- 1.** Those who are to become believers are chosen by God (Psalm 33:12; Matthew 20:16; Mark 13:20; John 15:16; Romans 8:29, 9:13-23; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 17:14).
- 2.** The Father draws them through the washing of regeneration (Exodus 40:30-32; Proverbs 30:12; Ezekiel 16:8-9, 36:25; John 6:44, 13:10, 15:3; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; Revelation 1:5, 7:14).
- 3.** Hearts (consciences) are cleansed of evil and dead works (Deuteronomy 10:16; Ezekiel 38:26; John 12:37-40; Acts 28:27, 7:51; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 3:12-15, 9:14, 10:22)

4. The human spirit is quickened (made alive) in Christ (Psalm 71:20, 119:50; Ezekiel 36:26; John 5:21; 1 Corinthians 15:36, 45; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13).
5. God's saving faith is given to mix with the Word, leading unto belief (John 5:24; Romans 3:26, 4:5, 5:1, 9, 16, 17, 10:9-10; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 4:2; Galatians 2:16, 3:24; Acts 13:39).
6. By joining Christ in death on the cross through repentance the old Adamic (sinful) nature dies (Ezekiel 14:6, 18:30, 36:26; Matthew 3:8, 4:17; Mark 1:4, 6:12; Luke 13:3, 5, 15:7, 10, 18:13-14, 24:27; Romans 2:4; Acts 2:38, 3:19-21, 5:30-31, 17:30, 20:21, 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 2 Timothy 2:24-25).
7. The believer is resurrected in Christ a new (born-again) creature, an adopted son of God (John 1:12-13, 3:3-7; Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:23-26, 4:4-7, 6:15; Ephesians 1:3-6; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 1 John 2:29, 3:1, 2, 9, 14). Water baptism is a ceremony celebrating this born-again experience.
8. Baptism in, or receiving, the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27; John 3:5-6, 14:16-17, 15:26, 16:7; Luke 11:13; Acts 2:4, 10:44; Romans 8:2, 5, 9, 11, 13, 15-16, 23, 26; 1 Corinthians 2:14, 3:16, 6:19, 12:4-12; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 4:4-7, 5:16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:10; Titus 3:4-5).

9. Sanctification of the Body

Man is a tripartite being, created in God's image: soul, body, and spirit vis-a-vis God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. God's ultimate purpose in creating mankind was to populate the new heaven and earth with a holy people, abandoned to their love for Him. The incident in the NT when Jesus was at dinner in the Pharisee's house comes to mind here. Luke 7:37-38, 47 says, *"And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment . . . Wherefore, I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."* This is the kind of agape love God seeks from those that will join Him in eternity, and this is the kind of love that draws us into the relationship God desires. *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"* (Galatians 5:14).

We know that no evil can come into God's presence (Habakkuk 1:13), so it seems clear that the body believers receive when resurrected or raptured must be totally free of evil: the body, soul, and spirit that becomes our new identity

in the Kingdom of God for eternity must be absolutely, and totally, holy (Ephesians 4:23-24). Even Moses, who had found grace in God's eyes, could not look on God's face, for no man can see Him and live (Exodus 33:20-23). Moses' sin had not been covered by the blood of sacrifice; therefore, he was not free of sin in God's eyes. In contrast to the human body, man's human spirit and soul owe their existence to the creative power of God alone. According to Hodge's "Systematic Theology" the common doctrine of the church has ever been that the soul of the newborn is not generated or derived from the parents, but is created by the immediate agency of God. He uses no physical processes in their formation. Several scriptures refer to the fact that God made man's spirit: Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Zechariah 12:1 state that God "*gave*" and "*formed*" man's spirit, and Ecclesiastes adds that man's spirit returns to "*God who gave it*" upon physical death. We understand from Matthew 10:28 and Revelation 6:9, that our soul accompanies man's spirit to heaven (or hell) at physical death. Job 34:14 states that God can gather unto himself man's spirit and breath (life/soul). The Bible seems to say that the soul can be separated from the body, but it cannot be separated from the spirit. Vincent's Word Studies in the NT says that Hebrews 4:12 is not to be understood as dividing soul from spirit, or joints from marrow. He points out that the soul and spirit cannot be said to be

separated in any sense such as this, and joints and marrow are not in contact with each other. He maintains that the joints and marrow in this scripture should be thought of as representing the joints and marrow of the soul and spirit. In other words, this scripture refers to the Word of God penetrating to the very depths of the soul and spirit, to sift and analyze thoughts and intents residing within the heart. This seems to accord with Galatians 5:17 in that the spirit is at war with the flesh (heart), and the Word of God penetrates to the depths of the soul and spirit to assist in resolving the resulting skirmishes.

We conclude from the above that the part of regenerated man that cannot enter into God's presence at death is his earthly body, and this is substantiated throughout the Bible, especially in the NT. I believe 1 Corinthians 15:35-50 explains this in beautiful language unequaled by any other source. Man's earthly body is placed in the ground at his physical death. This is not the body that *"shall be,"* but *"bare grain"*: not clothed with spiritual clothing. Just as in the case of a seed planted in the ground, this earthly body must die (decay) so that God can quicken the rudimentary embryo within it at resurrection, and raise the embryo up in a new spiritual body, which will be joined to the soul/spirit that accompanies Christ when He returns in the clouds to gather His elect (Matt. 24:27-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:14). 1 Corinthians 15:43-44 says, *"It is sown in*

dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” Verse 49 adds that *“as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”* This heavenly body that we receive upon resurrection (or rapture) would seem to be the *“mansion”* (abode) promised by Jesus in John 14:2, and referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:2-3: *“For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.”*

We conclude from this that the spiritual clothes we don at resurrection (rapture) must correspond to the spiritual works done in our earthly bodies after we have believed into Jesus Christ, been born again, received the Holy Spirit, and have entered that phase of our spiritual life referred to in the Bible as sanctification. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 further supports this conclusion in discussing how these *“works,”* built upon gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble are *“proven”* by the Lord when we join Him in the clouds.

1 Corinthians 3:11 adds that the only foundation upon which to *“build”* these *“works”* is Jesus Christ. Thus, we know *“works”* that prove to be fireproof must be done at the behest of the Holy Spirit in accordance with the Lord’s plan.

The Work of Sanctification

When Paul was arrested by the Jews and later rescued by the Romans after it was disclosed that he was a Roman citizen, he appeared before king Agrippa in Caesarea. In his own defense Paul summed up his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus: he was to be a minister and witness to the Gentiles *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18). Oswald Chambers comments on this verse in his book entitled “My Utmost for His Highest,” which says that the words “that they may receive remission of sins” refer to salvation. He further adds that salvation means that we are brought to the place where we are able to receive something from God through Jesus Christ, viz., remission of sins. There follows the second mighty work of grace: *‘and inheritance among them which are sanctified.’* In sanctification the regenerated soul deliberately gives up the right to himself to Jesus Christ, and identifies himself entirely with God’s interest in other men.”

I recently had the opportunity to speak on the subject of sanctification to two groups of people with widely varying Christian backgrounds. I was surprised, and somewhat taken-aback, by the largely negative response I

received. I also had a “sidebar” discussion on sanctification with a men’s group I meet with, and detected a little negativity toward this subject from them as well. I confess that I was disappointed, and somewhat confused by the reactions I received which varied from a comment by one attendee that the Bible says, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and that’s all we need to know,” to confusion from several others about works done during the sanctification process vis-a’-vis salvation by faith alone. When I discussed this with my wife she suggested that many Christians harbor negative feelings toward those claiming gifts of the Holy Spirit: they think they are looked-down upon by those with spiritual gifts (see Luke 18:11).

I believe there are three simple points that help us understand confusion about sanctification:

- 1.** Belief “in” Jesus Christ is a necessary but incomplete step in His plan for those His Father has chosen and given to Him (John 17:6-26). Belief “in” Christ must lead to belief “into” Him if we are to become holy (sanctified).
- 2.** We are saved not by works but by faith alone, and that not of ourselves (Ephesians 2:8). After we are saved, the works accomplished in our bodies must be proven as to what sort they are: whether they are built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

3. Gifts of the Holy Spirit are gifts from God, and nothing (including the attitude of others) must keep us from wanting more of Him in our lives.

One possible difficulty is that the new convert may not have received the Holy Spirit: his/her belief is “in Christ” and not “into Him”. Ezekiel 36:27, as well as many other scriptures, records the fact that God will give believers His Spirit (the Holy Spirit): the Comforter Jesus promised to send after He went to the Father (John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7). Acts 2:38 states that those who repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins will receive the Holy Spirit, but we know from several cases in the Book of Acts, that these events do not necessarily happen concurrently (see Acts 8:14-17). Many believers that I have questioned about this attest to the same experience: they received the Holy Spirit some time after they believed. One instance is recorded in which a group of Gentiles received the Holy Spirit while Peter was yet witnessing to them. Acts 10:44 records that “*While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*”. Cornelius and those that were gathered with him began to magnify God and speak with other tongues before they were baptized in the name of Jesus. In talking to many people about the salvation experience in their lives nearly all attest to a period of some time between recognizing Jesus as Savior, and receiving baptism in the Holy

Spirit. My own experience further validates this: I believed and was baptized in name of Jesus Christ as a teenager. I did not receive the Holy Spirit until I was 33 years old, when I had a personal encounter with the Lord. In my case it was “believing in Jesus Christ” initially, and “believing **into** Jesus Christ” later. As mentioned earlier believing “into” the Lord is not the same as believing “in” Him (John 6:30). My experience would argue that when one believes into Jesus Christ they receive the Holy Spirit. For those that have truly believed, repented, and been baptized in Jesus’ name, but have not received the Holy Spirit, God promises to give it to them if they will ask (Luke 11:13).

Some clarifying remarks are in order here about receiving, or being baptized, in (or by) the Holy Spirit. In John 14:17 Jesus described the Holy Spirit as “*dwelling with*” the disciples but “*being in*” them later. I believe this describes the condition of believers who are first drawn by the Father via the working of the Holy Spirit “*dwelling with*” them, and later, “*being in*” them after they have received the Holy Spirit. I believe the Bible makes it clear that we do not receive the Holy Spirit in part. In other words, when you receive the Holy Spirit you receive the third person of the trinity in His entirety, not piecemeal. He comes with all His attributes intact: all the fruits (Galatians 5:22-23), and gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28) are in Him. However,

this does not mean that all these fruits and gifts will be manifested immediately in the life of the one to whom He comes. The fruit(s) you bear and the gift(s) you manifest are a direct function of how thoroughly you are “purged” (1 Corinthians 5:7, Proverbs 16:6), and how firmly you are attached to the vine (Jesus Christ), from whom we receive our nourishment (John 15:4-5). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to edify the body of Christ, and God selects the gift to be manifested based on the readiness of the vessel (body member), and the need of the church body (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-12).

John Owen, in his book entitled: “The Holy Spirit,” lists three reasons why growth in holiness is often neglected: a) believers presume they are already perfect and have no need for further evangelical obedience, b) believers assume they are in a state of grace and therefore need not be concerned about becoming holy and obedient in all things (see Rom. 6:1-2), and c) weariness, despair, and depression arising from opposition to the work of holiness. Although Owen wrote during the seventeenth century, the reasons he gives apply to many in our own day; however, from a twentieth century point-of-view I would argue that another great impediment to understanding and acceptance of the discipline of sanctification is a lack of preaching and

teaching on this vital subject. I do not remember ever hearing a sermon, or teaching, on this subject before my personal encounter with the Lord in 1963. Thus, I was ill-prepared to let the Lord sanctify me: I was not even acquainted with the sanctifier: the Holy Spirit. Sadly, I do not see a big change in this situation even today. There has been an explosion of sorts in the proliferation of non-denominational charismatic church bodies, including great emphasis on the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit, but in my experience in association with several of these in different cities in Texas and New Mexico has not been encouraging in regard to preaching and teaching the discipline of sanctification. 2 Timothy 4:3 GNT says, *“For a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own lusts, they will heap up to themselves teachers, tickling the ear; and they will turn away the ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.”* We seem to be a society that refuses to hear, and accept, the hard teachings in God’s Word characteristic of the great preachers of the past. We need only to remember the scripture in Hebrews 12:14: *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness (the sanctification), without which no man shall see the Lord.”*

This brings us back to the process of sanctification, and what happens in the believer’s life after he/she has believed into Jesus Christ. The understanding I get from the Bible on the subject of sanctification is that it is

directly related to the “purging” referred to above. Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26(b) gives us one of the first clues we get on this subject: both scriptures refer to taking away our “*stony heart*” and replacing it with a heart of “*flesh*”. Other places in the Bible refer to individuals hardening their hearts, or having them hardened by God (Exodus 7:13, 8:15; 2 Chronicles 36:13; Job 9:4; Isaiah 63:17; Daniel 5:20; Mark 8:17; Hebrews 3:13). The sacrificial system in the OT was established by God so that priests could be “sanctified” by washing with water and sprinkling of blood before coming into His presence in the tabernacle: their sins and the evil condition of their hearts had to be “covered” by the blood of sacrifice. Even the sacrifices brought by penitents seems symbolic of sanctification: the blood of the sacrifice proved that there was a death of something dear given to cover the sin of their heart. Mark 16:14 records the fact that it was unbelief, and hardness of hearts that kept the disciples from believing that Jesus had risen. Romans 2:5 refers to hardness and impenitent hearts that treasure up wrath against the day of judgment. God loves those with a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17), and Isaiah 57:15 says that God revives the heart of the contrite ones. I believe this is what sanctification is all about, reviving hearts: “to bring (hearts) back to a healthy, vigorous, or flourishing condition after a decline” (Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language). The

way God chose to accomplish this is through sanctification, renewing our minds (part of the Biblical heart), and He does this by removing the “hard” and “stony” places out of our hearts. These “hard” and “stony” places represent the thoughts and memories stored in our minds before becoming believers, as well as the thoughts and memories still within us derived from the lust of our eyes, lust of our flesh, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Thus, sanctification is in reality the emptying of ourselves of all these things which impede the Holy Spirit’s working through us to achieve Christ’s plan for our lives, and to use our purged vessel to “...*preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken- hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord*” (Luke 4:18-19). These are the works referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, that will be tested by the refiner’s fire to see if they are works of the Holy Spirit, or merely the works of man.

In Oswald Chamber’s “My Utmost for His Highest” comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 says that “Sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule us. Are we prepared for what it will cost? It will cost us everything that is not of God in us.” On Hebrews 12:5, he says, “Sanctification is not my idea of what I want God to do for me; sanctification is God’s idea of what He wants to do for me, and to get

me into the attitude of mind and spirit where at any cost I will let Him sanctify me wholly.” And on 2 Corinthians 10:5, “It is only when God has altered our disposition and we have entered into the experience of sanctification that the fight begins. The warfare is not against sin; we can never fight against sin; Jesus Christ deals with sin in Redemption. The conflict is along the line of turning our natural life into a spiritual life, and this is never done easily, nor does God intend it to be done easily. It is done only by a series of moral choices. God does not make us holy in the sense of character; He makes us holy in the sense of innocence, and we have to turn that innocence into moral character by a series of moral choices. These choices are continually in antagonism to the entrenchments of our natural life, the things that erect themselves as ramparts against the knowledge of God. We can either go back and make ourselves of no account in the Kingdom of God, or we can determinedly demolish these things and let Jesus bring another son to glory.”

I believe that a good way to bring this to a close is to provide a list of important scriptures related to sanctification in the hope that readers will be interested enough to study and seriously consider the things God has given us about this great work He wants to do through and in us.

- 1.** In Jesus' great prayer before going to His death He asked the Father to sanctify those that were given to Him (John 17:17).
- 2.** 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that because we are in Christ we have the wisdom of God: righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
- 3.** Sanctification concerns redemption of the body, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4 says that because we are sanctified we must abstain from fornication: a sin against the entire body.
- 4.** 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says that God chose us from the beginning through sanctification by the Holy Spirit.
- 5.** 1 Peter 1:2 states that the elect are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by sanctification of the Spirit, and obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.
- 6.** 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 is Paul's prayer for Christians that the God of peace would sanctify them completely.
- 7.** 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are changed into His image (are sanctified) from one glory to a greater glory.
- 8.** Ephesians 4:23-24 says that we are renewed in our mind and put on the new man (sanctified) in righteousness and true holiness.

9. God has promised to sanctify us, to work His holiness in us; He does not leave us to do it by our own ability and power (Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39-40; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

10. It is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies all believers, and who produces holiness (Psalm 51:10-12; Ezekiel 11:19; Romans 8:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-5).

11. Regeneration is one creative and instantaneous act; whereas sanctification is progressive. It begins after regeneration and continues until physical death (John 3:3, 5; Colossians 2:19; Philippeans 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 3:17-18).

12. The Holy Spirit does the work of holiness by strengthening His graces in us (Ephesians 3:16-17; Colossians 1:10-11; Isaiah 40:29; Psalm 138:8).

13. Paul encourages us to press on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).

14. Only those that believe into the Lord Jesus Christ, and in God the Father through Him are sanctified (John 17:17, 19-20, 7:38-39; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 5:23).

15. We receive our promised inheritance by being sanctified through the faith of Jesus Christ working within (Acts 26:18).

16. Hebrews 12:14 states that holiness (sanctification) is required for a man to enter into the immediate presence of the Lord.

17. We are to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives (Luke 1:75).

18. It is the Holy Spirit's holiness within us that is manifested in our acts of ministry (Acts 3:12).

19. We are to render the members of our body servants to righteousness unto holiness (Romans 6:19).

20. The fruit of the Spirit manifested in our lives grows as we become more holy and sanctified (Romans 6:22).

21. We are to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit in holiness through the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

22. Through love the Lord establishes our hearts unblameable in holiness before God the Father (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

23. God chastises those He loves for their profit, that they can become partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

Questions from 1 Thessalonians

Chapter 1

1. Explain verse 4 (refer to 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Chapter 4

1. Who is it that will come with Jesus in verse 14?
2. Explain what happens in verse 16.
3. How is the change that occurs for those that are still alive different from those who sleep?

Chapter 5

1. Can you identify the clue in verse 9 regarding the rapture of believers (see Revelation 16:1)?

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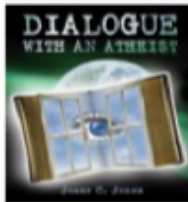
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