

多倫多以馬內利華人浸信會

進深研經班

之

帖撒羅尼迦前書

黃紹權著

God Gives! God Takes!

So what is valuable in us for God to take?

- Rev. Alan SK Wong

獻給

所有愛慕主道的人！

並

在家中看管兒女，給我安心研究寫作的內子：

黃劉寶明

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- 後工作會計及教育界，曾任職中學預科地理科教師及香港大學城市規劃研究中心電腦系統主任
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引言

帖撒羅尼迦位於馬其頓省中的一個城市，處愛琴海的北灣。若走陸路，帖撒羅尼迦乃必經之地。帖撒羅尼迦乃昔日文化、經濟和政治環境重鎮，帖撒羅尼迦昔日地位僅次於雅典。

帖撒羅尼迦教會的簡史與背景

- 於主後五十年，保羅、西拉和提摩太一同旅行傳道(第二次旅程)。參使徒行傳 17: 1 – 9。
 - 帖撒羅尼迦教會，就在這次旅程時開始，保羅曾於當地會堂講道三個安息日(有傳是連續三星期，另外亦有傳是分開三次，但這並不重要！)參使徒行傳 17:2
 - 這段佈道期間，保羅等人曾住於耶孫的一家基督徒中，但時間很短。之後，因為耶孫等幾個基督徒同時被捕，於是乎保羅等人便離開帖撒羅尼迦教會逃至雅典。
 - 教會所受的逼迫，分別由羅馬政府與及猶太教而來。
- (參使徒行傳 17:1 – 9；提摩太後書 4:9)
- 當日教會中有多人去世，因此保羅談及死後的事。(參帖前 4:13 - 18)
 - 帖撒羅尼迦前書成書日期，可能在保羅等人在逃至雅典時寫成的(參 3: 1)，但前書也可能在保羅後來到達哥林多時，經過提摩太由帖撒羅尼迦報喜訊回來之後才完成此書。(參哥林多後書 1:19)
 - 保羅第二次寫帖撒羅尼迦後書，目的更在於重申基督的基本信仰，並譴責不事奉神的行為。

帖撒羅尼迦前書簡介

作者：保羅(與西拉及提摩太)，留意西拉只有在第二次行程中與保羅同工。

成書期:大約主後 50 – 52 年間。(是保羅最早時期所寫的書信之一)

對象：帖撒羅尼迦的信徒(信主的人 cf. 1:7；2:10 & 13)

留意：在帖撒羅尼迦前後書的研讀前，我們會有時聽聞前後書的次序有誤，有人認為後書是寫於前書前，有人更把前後書重新組合編排，這實在是不必要的行為，但在進深研讀上的緣由，我們有需要了解其他學者分析，所以在此也列出其他人的 redaction(校訂批評學)¹，並列出這些分析不成立的原因。在最後，我們會按前書和後書的次序分段，並以此進行是次研經。

(1)認為前後書重組的分段(認為前後書本為四卷書信)²

- a. 帖後 1:1 – 12；3:6 – 16
- b. 帖前 1:1 – 2:12；4:2 – 5:28
- c. 帖後 2:13 – 14；2:1 – 12；2:15 – 3:5；3:17 – 18
- d. 帖前 2:13 – 4:1

¹ Redaction Criticism 源於 Form Criticism，前者主要針對 redactor(編輯者)在編輯時所存的神學觀，後者著重經文來源和編輯的緣由。

² Schmithals, Paul 1223 – 218; esp. 212 – 214 (cf. Collins 118 – 124)

- (2)認為前書中有部份是後來加插的，例如(帖前 1:2 - 2:16; 3: 12 - 4:8; 5:23-27; 5:14-15)
- (3)有人認為前書中的 4: 13-18 與 5:1-11 內容有矛盾之處，因此 5:1-11 可能是後來加插；另 2:13-16 也有同樣的問題。

反對的論據:

關於(1):

- 有人認為保羅書信都應有一格式，如先有處名，問候，內容，個人囑咐和祝福禱告。但前書中的問候都特別長，不合一貫固有格式，所以需要重組前後書，但這種前設是不需也不洽當的。
- 若要按此重組前後書，就必需沒有前書的處名、感恩、引言和祝福。如此推論，把後書放於前書之前，更需把部份刪改，這更不合原文的記載。
- 把前後書合併為一的動機何在？所以重組兩卷書是不必要的修改(Form Criticism)

關於(2):

- 有指 1:9 – 10； 3:12 – 13 和 5:23 皆指出救恩是被喻為全是將來的事，與保羅一貫「救恩已經成就」的神學觀不乎，所以是後來插入。但這一說法豈不是要用我們的思維去重新界定聖經作者對神啓示的領受嗎？
- 其實保羅於其他書信中講述救恩，也曾有用「將來式」，例如加拉太書 3:23 – 25。
- 保羅的救恩觀念並非只有「已經成就了」，也包括「將來的事」，例如帖前:1； 2: 14； 3:8； 4:1 & 16； 5:12 & 18，都以「在主耶穌基督裡」與「在主裡」來形容「Ready But Not Yet」的救恩觀念。

關於(3):

- 有關保羅對死後信徒的去向與及仍在世信徒的等候矛盾之說，實則是不必要的爭論，皆因談論的事物主角不同，可以講，保羅是在牧養教會信徒時，按不同的事物，透過神的引導而出適切的教導，是自然的事。
- 主再來與今世已死信徒的未來是兩個沒有衝突的課題，不存矛盾的根據。雖然兩者近似且關連的課題，但兩者是對不同對象的啓示。

帖撒羅尼迦前書分段大綱(引用 Y.K. Fung 馮蔭坤的分段，後經修改。)

1:1	處名、問安	
1:2 - 10	感恩	
2:1 - 12	自辯	
2:13 - 16	再次感恩	
2:17 - 3:13	繼續自辯	
4:1 - 5:24	勸勉: 4:1 - 12	人生的動機和意義
	4:13 - 18	在悲哀中的盼望
	5:1 - 11	警醒度日
	5:12 - 24	信徒行事的藍圖
5:25 - 28	結語	

帖撒羅尼迦前書的主要題目

- (1) 面對逼迫患難(帖前 1:6a ; 2:14 – 15 ; 3:3 – 4 ; 帖後 1:4 ; 3:5)
- (2) 稱讚守主道的見證(帖前 1:6b ; 2:13 ff ; 2:20 ; 3:7 ff ; 帖後 1:3 - 4 ; 2:15)
- (3) 信徒的見證與信心(帖前 2:13 ff ; 4:1 ff ; 5:8 – 22 ; 帖後 2:10 ; 3:5)
- (4) 警戒沒有生命見證的信徒(帖前 5:14 – 22 ; 帖後 2:1 - 12 ; 3:6 - 14)
- (5) 真喜樂(帖前 2:19 – 20)
- (6) 末世與死後的聖經觀(帖前 4:13 - 5:3 ; 帖後 1:5 - 12)



帖撒羅尼迦教會及鄰近地區

帖撒羅尼迦 Thessalonica 簡介:

這是馬其頓(希臘北部)一個十分重要的城市，於公元前 332 年由亞歷山大大帝一名軍官卡山達所建。它是帖撒羅尼迦海灣上一個海港。保羅曾探訪此城(徒 17:1-8)，並給帖撒羅尼迦教會寫了兩封書信，解答他們在信仰上的疑問。

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帖撒羅尼迦前書 1:1-10 美名及遠邇

在第一章之中，我們見到保羅開始就不住為帖撒羅尼迦教會而感恩和惦念。並且保羅是非常了解帖撒羅尼迦教會中的見證。就讓我們從本章中找出帖撒羅尼迦教會蒙此稱讚的原因，並學習怎樣能夠在我們今天處身的教會內外，切實活出真真實實的基督徒樣式，在眾民中彰顯基督。

1:1 - 此乃開場處名和問候，保羅、西拉與及提摩太的處名中自白他們與該教會有密切的關係。從希臘文文法中知道，保羅分別用上 **Dative**(附屬性詞)，即 **in** 及 **to** 分別顯出，他們與教會同屬一個團體，可見心相契合的主內關係。

原來「恩惠」一詞再次在問安中出現，是從父神與主耶穌而來的屬性，甚至是指救恩。

另外，「平安」一詞，也是指父神與主耶穌而來的屬性。(詩 120:7)

正如(約 1:14 & 17)的介紹，這是在舊約中指到耶和華的屬性(出 34:6)。

思想:保羅等同工與帖撒羅尼迦教會的彼此相屬關係，在我們教會中是否存在並且得著建造呢？

1:2-3 - 在此節經文，主要動詞是 **Εὐχαριστοῦμεν**(獻上感恩)，而文法上的結構如下：

Εὐχαριστοῦμεν(獻上感恩)

└ **ποιούμενοι**(Temporal 時間性:正當我們...在祈禱中常常記念時)

└ **μνημονεύοντες**(Causal 原因性:因為我們回憶起...)

- 保羅特意在向神獻上感恩時，列出時間性和前因後果，目的是顯明感恩的原因：
 1. 親近神的時候
 2. 回憶與同工同處的經歷，並非無緣無故，並且得來不易，是經過神與人同工同處分擔之後的結果。持續地依靠和實踐。

NET Quote, " Christian virtues in action: the work produced by faith, labour motivated by love, and endurance that stems from hope in Christ."

* 換句話說:行為乃由基督生命而生(Sola fide)

思想:今天我們憑甚麼推動我們能活像基督呢？甚麼是“唯有信心”的救恩？

1:4-5 - 在這兩節經文中，指望基督徒的生命能夠成為基督彰顯的媒介/平台 (Medium / Platform)

- 承接 1:2 - 3節，保羅轉用“察驗 / 知道 (**Οίδα**)”一詞去印證帖撒羅尼迦教會教會所得的「新生命」。

- 留意中文的繙譯也把原文結構中的主句，即“因為我們的福音傳到你們那裡”放在第五節開首。明顯，作者在此處使用了 **Chiastic Structure** (交叉式結構):

“ **Οίδα - γίνομαι - Οίδα** ” 而這一句經文卻指出神是如何能夠把「弟兄們」歸入到“神所愛”和“蒙揀選的”類別中。

- 更重要，這福音得以傳遞，不單只是憑著言教，也同時是透過保羅等人的活生生見證(1:5 下)，並神在人中間的工作(1:5 中)締造而成的結果。“**οὐκ ... ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ; και; ἐν ...**”

思想:新生命在乎福音，這裡我們怎樣憑藉著新生命去事奉傳福音呢？

去察驗 / 知道別人是否有福音在其生命中，這算不算是論斷呢？

察驗 / 知道人有福音在其生命中，意義何在？

1:6-7 - 主事位(Subject)由原先的“我們 (We)”改變為“你們 (You – 2Mpl.)”

- 按原文所指，當聖靈使到帖撒羅尼迦教會效法³保羅和主基督時，他們雖在大難之中(ἐν θλίψει πολλῇ)，但仍存喜樂，領受真道(λόγον)，最終更成為馬其頓和亞該亞教會的榜樣，真正的信只有在迫逼中驗證出來(參 2:14; 3:4-6)。

思想:若我們受大難時，我們會怎樣面對呢？

若我們處逆境時，我們會喜樂和更認真領受真道嗎？

1:8 - 第八節其實緊接第七節中所提到的見證，帖撒羅尼迦教會先前憑著領受神的真道，為其他地區教會作見證，如今第八節中更加上「你們的信心」，成為另一項主要見證。

- 「神的真道」誘發「信主的人」的信心。 cf. 羅馬書 10:14 - 17

思想:見證的能力並不在於人言，而是神的真道。見證能否觸動人心，乃在乎見證的本質，而非言詞之美。當真實地活出神說話內涵時，言語的內容也清楚辯明。

今天我們在教會中，憑甚麼去辨別那些才是神真實的說話呢？

除此之外，我們怎樣才能賺取到像保羅對帖撒羅尼迦教會一樣的稱讚呢？

1:9-10 - 這兩節經文，反映出馬其頓和亞該亞省的信徒，怎樣認識到帖撒羅尼迦教會所信的基督！

- * 留意 1:8 及 9 兩節，都是列出帖撒羅尼迦教會有有力見證的因由！

以下略為歸納：

1. 神的真道
2. 在神之中有信心
3. 行為上反映出信心 i.e. 接待保羅等人的心志和安排。回轉棄掉偶像歸向神，服侍又真又活的神，盼望主再來。對基督的整全認識。

- * Wrath (忿怒， ὀργῆς) - 意思是被激發 / 刺激的自然反應，也有被挑起的含意，通常是多指為神的忿怒，與另一個字 (θυμός) 多數用作形容是人的怒氣有別。cf 羅馬書 1:18; 2:5ff; 5:9

思想:我們今天有沒有竭力去辨認神的真道呢？

我們常常自稱是有神真道的人，但在個人檢醒上，我們是討神喜悅，抑或是怠神的忿怒呢？

³ 「效法主」曾出現於 1:6 及再次於 2:9-11, 14 重提，可參林前 4:16; 11:1; 弗 5:1; 帖後 3:7&9。

Sola Fide, Solafidianism

General Information

Martin Luther proclaimed a message of divine promise and denounced the human merits through which, he feared, most Catholics thought they were earning the favor of God.

Lutheranism soon became more than the experience of Luther, but it never deviated from his theme that people are made right with God sola gratia and sola fide - **that is, only by the divine initiative of grace as received through God's gift of faith.** Because Luther came across his discoveries by reading the Bible, he also liked to add to his motto the exhortation sola scriptura, which means that Lutherans are to use the Bible alone as the source and norm for their teachings.

Sola Fide - Sola Gratia - Sola Scriptura

General Information

Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation based on the concepts of these three Latin phrases.

Sola Gratia means "by Divine Grace alone". That means that people cannot "earn" their way into Heaven by "Good Works" but are entirely dependent on the Generosity and Grace of God for it. This eliminated the value of "human merits" and said that God Alone could affect that outcome.

Sola Fide means "by Faith alone". This refers to the "human" side of the above concept. Since people could not actively "earn" their way into Heaven, this statement was necessary to describe exactly what requirement actually applies to us. It essentially says that we each must totally accept that the Lord is God, that He is the Only God, and that the person recognizes His Atonement as freeing mankind to be able to accept Him. When a person deeply believes that, it fulfills the human responsibility, which then encourages the Lord to provide His Grace.

Usually, a third Latin phrase is associated with those two, Sola Scriptura, which means "by the Bible alone". Rather than trusting any human to provide information about important religious information, that statement means to ONLY rely on what the Sacred Scripture says.

Martin Luther had discovered these things IN the Bible, and that's why he added this last phrase. Before that, there had developed the process of "Indulgences" where wealthy people could give large amounts of money to the Church (supposedly a "Good Work") in exchange for a guarantee of getting into Heaven. Luther was pointing out that such a procedure had no value in the Mind of God, and that, more generally, we really have no "say" in the matter of what God chooses to do with each of us.

Solafidianism (Lat. sola fide - faith alone)

Advanced Information

The doctrine that salvation is by faith only. The term emerged as a consequence of Luther's translation of Rom. 3:28 in which he added the word "alone" to the phrase "man is justified by faith [alone] apart from works of the Law" (NASB). He was severely castigated for this, but Erasmus defended him. The translation is justifiable in view of the only alternative, namely justification by works, which Paul expressly repudiated. The Council of Trent (1545 - 63), on the other hand, vigorously opposed Luther's translation and all that it implied by declaring: "If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema" (Session 6, Can. 12).

Implicit in solafidianism is the doctrine of divine monergism, which declares that man's salvation is totally dependent upon God's activity and is in no way conditioned by the action of man. Man's choice of sin has rendered him incapable of spiritual action; he is spiritually dead. Unless rescued by a source outside himself, he would eternally perish in this state. God has taken the initiative by restoring mankind to himself through the death of Christ (Christ's passive obedience to the law), which removes man's guilt, and by imputing Christ's righteousness (which he achieved while on earth through his active obedience to the law) to those who believe. Saving faith is not an innate quality of fallen man but a gift of God (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29) communicated through hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17). The *ordo salutis* ("order of salvation") is God's activity in grace from inception to consummation. Understandably solafidianism is opposed to Pelagianism, semi - Pelagianism, and synergism, all of which attribute justification or the apprehension of it, in one way or another, to the action of man.

F R Harm

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帖撒羅尼迦前書 2:1 - 20

分段如下:

2:1 - 2	保羅自辯佈道的差命乃從耶和華而發
2:3 - 4	佈道的推動力
2:5 - 8	佈道事奉的應有態度見證 (1)- 母親待兒女的心
2:9 - 13	佈道事奉的應有態度見證 (2)- 父親待兒女的心
2:14 - 16	與主基督身同感受
2:17 - 20	喜樂的事奉祈盼

- 2:1 - 「徒然」一詞於原文為(κενῆ)，意思為“空泛、沒有內容、沒有根據、沒有真理 / 能力或沒有結果或效益”，有時更可解釋為“缺乏理據或空洞”。NIDNTT
- 2:2 - a. 有關保羅曾於腓立比受害一事，請參考使徒行傳 16:12 ff，特別有關保羅及西拉為一個巫女趕鬼一事，導致兩人都下在監裡的事，可見保羅等人傳道，原本的動機是叫人受益，但後來卻反而成為受逼迫的理由。
b. 保羅在第 2 節下半部指出他們仍放膽傳神的傳音，乃因他們在神之中有膽量。
思想:事奉有理據與能放膽傳福音有甚麼關連呢？我們有甚麼理據呢？
我們如何才可以靠神有膽量呢？
- 2:3 - 4 - 保羅向帖撒羅尼迦信徒介紹，有甚麼條件使到神會驗中他們成為「可把福音托付的人」呢？
a. 四個“不是”：保羅的勸勉
(i) 不是出於錯誤(Deceit) 2:3
(ii) 不是出於污穢(Impure motive)2:3
(iii)不是用詭詐(Trickery)2:3
(iv)不是討人喜歡(Please Mortals)2:4
b. 二項原則:
(i) 照樣講(we speak) 2:4 (參耶利米先知書 1-2)
(ii) 討那察驗我們心的神喜歡(Please God who tests our hearts)2:4
- 2:5 - 8 - 於 2:5 中，保羅解釋怎樣才是討神的喜歡。其中「討喜歡」並非指「諂媚 (Flattery⁴)」，也不是「貪心⁵」，最重要是神也為保羅等人作見證，得神的確立。而「藏著 προφάσει」一詞，可譯作「面具 Mask」，主要是強調人的動機，本詞可以有正面又或負面的含意，要視乎上文下理而定。
- 真正「討神喜歡」的態度乃:
(i) 在大可叫人尊重(原文是“重擔”⁶)的情況下，仍然不會(直接/間接)求「人的榮耀 / 稱讚」
(Praise from Mortals)(2:6)
(ii) 存心溫柔(2:7)，在此保羅用了母親乳養自己的孩子作喻。

⁴ Flattery 諂媚一詞，並不是我們一般所指的「向人說好聽的話/拍馬屁」，反而是指「塑造迎合大眾要求的神學觀」，務求使聽的人滿足自己宗教上的自我滿足感。

⁵ 貪心一詞可參西 3:5 中的「利慾」翻譯。

⁶ 「重擔/尊重」意指物資上的供應，可參考林前 9:3-18, 林後 11:7-11; 帖後 3:8

(iii)愛到底，甚至是把生命為所愛的人獻(2:8)i.e. 廣東諺語“賠上生命給別人”

- 思想:1. 事奉神乃需賠上生命給神！就好像基督為我們所施的愛，所以賠上祂的生命，成就我們的好處。我們所持的愛是怎樣的一種愛呢？
2. 在情理上，有時我們可以隨意祈求神；但有沒有為著更遠大的目標(例如佈道)，我們不單沒有求自己所想，反而刻制自己，成就更遠大的理想？
3. 甚麼才是真正的溫柔？

2:9 – 13 - 留意 2:1；2:9；2:14 及 2:17，都同樣稱呼收信人為「弟兄們」(ἀδελφοί)。

- 轉用「弟兄們」一詞，早於 1:4 中已開始，但自 1:6 – 7 明顯改變為「你們(you)」的主事位，更加明顯知道保羅對帖撒羅尼迦教會的了解和認同，處處都能夠從教會信徒角度，印證他們對保羅等人事奉的認同。
- 2:9 再次提及帖撒羅尼迦教會是關心保羅等人當日事奉的勞苦。而保羅等亦為帖撒羅尼迦信徒細心考慮。
- 2:10 回應 2:5 中，帖撒羅尼迦教會與及耶和華神仍然為保羅等作見證。見證到保羅等人的待人品格是：
 - (i) 聖潔(Pure / Holy - ὁσίως)
 - (ii) 公義(Upright / Righteous - δικαίως)
 - (iii)無可指摘 (Blameless - ἀμέμπτως)
- 事奉的能力，在於能夠感染別人學效，所以 2:11 – 12，保羅就以父親待自己兒女的見證，作為帖撒羅尼迦教會事奉態度的例證(Witness the witnesses)。其中保羅給他們的見證：
 - (i) 勸勉(Urging / Exhorted)
 - (ii) 安慰(Encouraging / Encouraged)
 - (iii)囑咐(Pleading / Charged)
- 這些見證能夠印證(Worthy of God who calls you)一個有主 / 神生命的信徒。
- 故此 2:13，保羅見帖撒羅尼迦教會的成長，於是滿心地感謝神⁷。並且了解到有神的靈在他們的生命中運行。

思想:信徒成長，功勞在於誰？

我們在那些地方能配稱為神的兒女呢？

作為基督徒，有沒有需要 / 責任去辨識誰有神的靈在其中運行呢？

若果有此需要，我們求辨識的目的何在呢？

2:14 – 16 - 此段再次以「弟兄們」作引言。代表保羅與帖撒羅尼迦教會的親密。

- 於 2:14 中，保羅藉猶太地各教會的受苦害經驗，與帖撒羅尼迦教會的遭遇彼此印證，感同身受。而「效法 μίμηται」一詞所指出的意思，是指帖撒羅尼迦教會、基督徒和其他的基督教會，都能彼此乃互相認受。
- 其中被感同身受的事有：
 - (i) 受本地人和猶太人苦害 (原文中分以 συμφυλετῶν(countrymen) … καὶ αὐτοὶ(ourselves))

⁷ 按本書的寫作特色來講，1:2-5; 2:13 和 3:9-13 組成一個三重(Triple)的感恩協奏(Thanksgiving Resonance)

(ii) 被殺趕如基督和猶太人(τῶν)的先知被殺(2:15)

- 有關先知被殺，其中一個可能解釋是太 23:29-36 中的撒迦利亞。

(參歷下 24:21)

a. 這些苦害人的人是:(2:15b - 16)

(i) 不得神的喜悅

(ii) 與眾人為敵(the whole humanity - πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις)

(iii) 常常充滿自己罪惡 – 阻外邦人得救

(iv) 忿怒臨在他們身上已經到了極處。

思想:受苦不受苦是信徒可選擇的嗎? 信徒可選擇的事物有那些呢?

我們在甚麼地方是能夠與基督和祂的教會感同身受呢?

2:17 – 20 - 承接 2:14 – 16 中談及的苦害，保羅於 2:17 及 18 中所指到離別和撒但 (ὁ σατανᾶς) 的阻擋，可正正是指使徒行傳 17:4 – 9，13 – 15；18:12 的逼害。

- 中文聖經中以「離別」一詞翻譯(ἀπορφανισθέντες)，原文是指 separate from / make orphans。

原句的翻譯為:”But now we, brothers, are separated [only] from you in this moment of time and appearance not heart ...”

- 2:19 及 20 組合成一對交叉式的結構，目的乃突顯帖撒羅尼迦教會的成就，同時也是保羅的盼望，是喜樂和所誇的冠冕(榮耀)。

Translated by Rev. Alan Wong

2:19 For this is our hope (cf. 羅馬書 4:18)

└ or joy

└ or crown of boasting c.f. 腓立比書 4:1

or is it not you [if it is not you, who?]

in front of our Lord Jesus in the end time (parousia⁸).

2:20 For you are now our glory and our joy.

思想:1. 很多時候，神對我們個別的計劃，與我們的個人計劃相比，會有很大差別，但我們怎樣才學會依就神計劃呢?

2. 真正的喜樂和榮耀是怎樣衡量呢? 感受? 數量? 利益?

3. 甚麼是 Hope(盼望)? 盼望是怎樣生出來的呢? 由我們的需求生出來嗎? cf. 來 11:1

「盼望 Hope」是本書的主題之一，參 1:3; 2:19; 4:13; 5:8。

⁸ 是本書中第一次出現。

帖撒羅尼迦前書第三章(在患難中的契合)

承接第二章末的關切，第三章中保羅盡顯與帖撒羅尼迦教會屬靈關係，並且從實際信徒平日的生活經歷，反覆印證他們同在主裡的生命。另外，第三章中有關信徒關係的討論，亦都引申至第四章中，有關帖撒羅尼迦信徒之間的命運，尤其關心到那些已死了的信徒命運；這正是信徒之間親密關係的明證。

以下為第三章的分段：

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| (1)不能再忍的關切關係 | 3:1 – 5 |
| (2)安慰中的喜樂生活 | 3:6 – 10 |
| (3)契合中的生命方向 | 3:11 – 13 |

(1)不能再忍的主內關切關係(3:1 – 5)

- 在這段落中，我們可以知道保羅的內心，是非常切望能與帖撒羅尼迦教會見面，並且彼此在主的真道中學習。這尤其反映出保羅對初接受主的帖撒羅尼迦教會，心感關切，保羅願意他們都能堅固(3:2)，抵擋「那誘惑人的」。

(3:1) - 本節與3:5形成一個括號式的結構(inclusio)。

- 在此處所指的“再忍”，英文翻譯為 Bear 或 stand，原文(στέγω)本義是 Cover，並非單指感情，而且指出保羅關切到這群新信基督徒能否在面對挑戰和試探時仍然得勝，因此希望知道教會的每一細節，從而隨時施教。

- 前者的「我們」，相信是指保羅，西拉與及提摩太，但本節後來談到「獨自」在雅典等候，正好說明保羅與另外兩位同工，曾經有一段時間是分別前往不同地方，繼續作傳道和牧養工作。(註:西拉後到腓立比，而提摩太再回帖撒羅尼迦)

(3:2) - 從“打發”一詞來看，保羅似乎是作策動的人，而其他同工則分工合作。至於「兄弟」一詞則用作同工之間的稱呼，所以提摩太不獨祇是同信主道的人，也有密切同工⁹的身份，一方面保羅既為提摩太的屬靈父親(林前 4:17, 提前 1:2)，另外有同等職份的“基督僕人”(神的執事 3:2)。

- 請留意保羅在描述提摩太的身份時如下：

1. 我們的兄弟在基督福音上

2. 作神執事的

* 既以基督福音為中心，同時是神的執事，而作堅固(To render constant)教會，又以所信的道作勸慰(Encourage / Instruct)，可見事奉神的人是以神的道為中心去事奉，並不以別的道來行神的事。

* 信徒之間的關係，就是(1)彼此堅固及(2)彼此勸慰。

(3:3) - 「諸般患難」乃重提保羅昔日與帖撒羅尼迦教會同遭逼迫一事。

- 「搖動」(σαίνω = 狗搖尾乞憐, hapax legomenon in NT)一詞乃指「乞求憐憫而稍得安慰」，可能保羅提醒教會不要因希望得到一時安慰，而出賣已信的道，反而要憑這時機，印證信與不信之人的分別。故此提摩太的安慰(encourage, cf. 2:12; 4:18; 5:11)，是以神的真道堅立/ 堅固(strengthen,

⁹ 這是保羅獨有的用語，唯一一次保羅以外的使用，是在約翰三書 8。

cf. 羅16:25; 帖前3:13; 帖後2:17)人心。(例: 潘霍華牧師的見證¹⁰)

- 「不要乞憐得安慰」的原因何在呢？
就是一個自信主那天已知道的真理，我們受惠難原是命定的¹¹」
- 我們信了主的人不會爲了旨在苟且偷安而屈枉神的道，原因爲我們選擇了的人生道路理念，是與這個仍在罪中世界的生存理念有抵觸的。我們只需要穿起屬靈的軍裝，打屬靈的仗，力抗罪惡世界的引誘和逼害。
- 所謂命定，英文翻譯爲“Destined for”，意思即不可逃避的事實，是本質上的設計。

(3:4)- 參考使徒行傳 14:22 中，保羅已申述信徒爲了要進入神的國，必會經歷許多艱難。而在本書 3:4 中，保羅重申這種屬靈經歷，早在保羅與帖撒羅尼迦教會同處時已廣爲介紹，如今，教會有相同的見證，正好確定這個論據。

* 留意，有些神學家會以此節爲論據，支持「大災難觀」的末世觀，但此乃以偏蓋全，亦是對「大災難」有偏差演譯！

(3:5)- 此節與 3:1 成爲一項 *inclusio*

- 該節主要重提差提摩太的緣由，更重要是保羅擔心教會同樣會受到撒但的誘惑，因而使信徒有屬靈倒退，例如失去自制(參林前 7:5)
- 勞苦歸於「徒然」(εἰς κενόν)，可參考以賽亞書 65:23 中七十士譯本和林後 6:1；另本書 2:1 中，有對於徒然定義註釋。

思想運用： 1. 主內情誼很能反映出信徒對真理的認識和接受，我們應如何建立這份彼此守望的關係呢？
2. 用甚麼去建立呢？
3. 信了主之後，我們有沒有跌入一種「徒然相信」的狀態呢？
參耶和米書 4:30 及 5:1 – 2ff

(2) 安慰信息中喜樂生活(3:6 – 10)

- 這段經文是引述提摩太把帖撒羅尼迦教會的好消息帶給保羅知道，知道教會見證堅固，深得安慰，但在安慰之時，保羅仍設想到帖撒羅尼迦教會的需要，不只是在昔日，並且在未來仍有成長空間故此以祈禱爲事奉。

(3:6)- 從「剛才 ἄρτι」一詞來看，此書應寫於提摩太回來不久的時候。

- 此處指好消息(εὐαγγελισαμένου)，與「福音」一詞同一字根。而此節中把好消息加上兩方面的質素描述：

- a. 你們的信心(πίστιν)
- b. 你們的愛心(ἀγαθὴν)

- 請留意，帖撒羅尼迦教會是一家初信的教會，但已經有好見證，並且能夠與牧者如保羅等建立了緊密情誼：

- a. 常常記念保羅等人
- b. 切切相見保羅等同工
- c. 如同保羅相見帖撒羅尼迦教會信徒一樣。

¹⁰ 潘霍華 Dietrich Bonhoeffer 短暫的卅九年生涯中，充滿了許多的憂患及迫害。三十歲時，潘氏失去了他的教職；卅四歲起被禁止公開證道；卅五歲，文章不得出版問世；卅七歲被捕入獄，在獄中不得會見訪客。最後，在一九四五年，四月九日，潘氏受絞刑處死(Flossenbürg concentration camp)。其實，這一連串的迫害沒有令潘氏退縮害怕，反倒使他對真理更加執著堅定。死亡也不能淹沒他的聲音，如今人們聆聽潘氏的聲音，試圖從他一留下來的著作裡認識耶穌基督。

¹¹ 參考太 10:17-42; 徒 9:16; 14:22; 羅 8:17-18, 35-39; 彼前 1:6-7; 4:12-19

- 保羅及帖撒羅尼迦教會的關係，可謂「心相契合」。參羅 1:11，腓 1:8
 - (3:7-8) - 困苦患難是信心的見證場地。
 - 而美好見證中的信心和愛心，更可抵消了保羅原本有的“唯恐” (3:5)，這一切便為保羅和西拉等生出「安慰」和「活的生命」。
 - 信徒往後的生命得以存活起來，皆因生命中顯明有主的生命，是有信心，堅固和有愛心，並不因為外在的苦果患難有否已被除去有關。
 - (3:9) - 信徒的生命活在真理中，堅固成長，這就是牧者的最大喜樂和安慰，同時也是神所喜悅的事。
 - (3:10) - 當信徒天天成長，牧者的回應是盼望他們更上一層樓，讓信心與日俱增，直至滿足。其中的方法有二：
 - a. 直接與信徒同處，一同行走天路，在旁施教。(10a)
 - b. 不住代求，求聖靈補滿不足信心的地方(10b)
- 思想運用: 1. 有生命活力的信徒，在平日的處事為人有何獨特之處呢？
 2. 信徒與牧者間，有沒有彼此認證在主裡的屬靈光景？
 3. 牧者對信徒所求是否過份或為求自己得安慰呢？
 4. 試煉的作用是甚麼？我們應如何面對試煉？

(3) 契合中的生活方向 (3:11 – 13)

- 這分段是一篇祝願(Optative Expression)，並清楚介紹信徒一生所應朝向的方向。
- (3:11) - 「一直引領」應譯為「引領一條正確道路」較合原文句式。這是保羅的第一個對帖撒羅尼迦教會的祈願。
 - 另外保羅的第二個祈願，內容包括：
 - a. 彼此相愛的心增長充足
 - b. 彼此愛眾人的心增長充足
 - 留心，保羅經常引用 Reflexive / Transitive type 的申述，證明帖撒羅尼迦教會所需的，也是保羅等同工盼望同得的。參(2:11; 3: 4, 6)
- (3:13)- 這裡指出二項屬靈的質素，但標準在於「在我們父神面前」：
 - a. 心裡堅固(參 3:2)- 不只是行為，而是人的中心(core)就是心。
 - b. 成為聖潔，無可責備 - 外在行為沒有可責，乃因內在靈性成為神的聖所¹² (ἀμέμπτους ἐν ἁγιωσύνη) 致。
 - 以 3:13 節為介紹，可見末世觀是已經部份實現了(Partial Realized eschatology):
 1. 今天神有審判，但終極的審判在將來。
 2. 今天信徒成聖，但終極的成聖在將來。

思想運用: 我們現今應如何預備將來，迎見主時的屬靈狀態？
 特別今天我們正活在不信的人中間，有沒有分辨那些才是令我們心裡堅固，成為聖潔，無可責備的事物和思維？

註:於第三章中完結之後，保羅從第四章開始本書第二部份的主題，亦都集中於講述信徒信主後的生活模式和態度，尤其有關聖潔生活和將來盼望的把握。保羅在這下半部的目的，正是他要兌現已作承諾(3:10 補滿你們信心不足)的見證。

“講得出就要做得到！”

¹² 哥林多前書 6:19 指出信徒的身體就是聖靈的殿。

帖撒羅尼迦前書第四章(勸勉聖潔與盼望的因由)

第四章是本書的下半部，也是保羅爲了兌現 3:10 中所承諾的教導而作出的勸勉。勸勉 / 勉勵(μᾶλλογ / πολλῶ)一詞包含:全部(πας)或圓滿(μᾶλλογ / πολλῶ cf. 羅馬5:15中的“加倍”)，其中有教訓、糾正和解釋的含意，目的是以神的道理建立完備的屬靈生命。本章的分段如下:

- (1)4:1 – 8 認清和虔守「聖潔」的道理
- (2)4:9 – 12 論弟兄們相愛
- (3)4:13 – 18 論盼望的實現

(I)認清和虔守聖潔的道理(4:1 – 8)

這分段的主旨，在於教導帖撒羅尼迦教會，如何朝向聖潔的生活。信徒要生活在聖潔中，並不只是心中信¹³就完結了，反而是要切實行出與所信的主匹配的身份才算是圓滿。

- (4:1)¹⁴
- (本段討論的主題)在原文的開始，保羅連續用了兩個同義動詞(ἐρωτῶμεν¹⁵ ... καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν¹⁶)，去勉勵信徒切實執行已接受的教訓，並按神喜悅的方法，繼續見證給更多人認識。留意英文翻譯是連用 ask 和 urge (NRSV / NIV)兩個同義詞，去懇求囑咐(Beg)帖撒羅尼迦教會。
 - 中文聖經中「更加勉勵」，英文譯爲 more and more，原文的意思是不斷增加，這與 4:10 περισσεύετε μᾶλλον 的用法相同，皆有肯定語氣，並互相呼應。
 - 此處所指出的命令，實質是一種師徒之間的傳統，保羅盼望帖撒羅尼迦教會的信徒，能夠把「聖潔」的信徒傳統，代代秉承，因此這節中保羅再次強調「傳遞¹⁷」的重要。請參考林前 11:2 & 23；15:1 – 3；加 1:9；腓 4:9；帖後 2:15；3:6
- (4:2 - 7)
- 4:2, 4:3-6a 及 4:7 並列出帖撒羅尼迦教會已知道的三¹⁸項基督耶穌傳下的主要教訓:
 - a. 保羅及同工與教會同在的時候，傳授的命令，是你們早知道的(4:2)
 - b. 神的旨意就是要我們成爲聖潔，遠避淫行(4:3-6a¹⁹)
 - c. 神召我們乃是要我們聖潔(4:7)
 - 「聖潔 ὁ ἁγιασμός²⁰」按 NIDNTT 中的解釋，一般慣常對舊約傳統

¹³ 羅馬書 2:13

¹⁴ 在本節中，有兩個重要的不定詞(Infinitive)是值得小心掌握其解釋：

περιπατεῖν - live 活(含有“自我管束” Conduct Oneself)

ἄρέσκειν - please 討喜悅(含有“得蒙接納” Be acceptable to)

另外，vv.1-8 中，καθώς (x12/ x85 在保羅書信中)一詞曾多次出現，參考 v.1 (既然、照)，v.6 (正如)；cf. v.11 (正如)

¹⁵ “Beg” or “Ask a question”，含反思性

¹⁶ “Comfort” or “Encouragement”，含直接指導性

¹⁷ cf. v.2 的「命令」；v.6 的「囑咐」

¹⁸ 按原文結構，此處用上三句以 γὰρ 開始的申述。

¹⁹ 在 vv.5-6a 的結構中，作者另外用上了三個連續的「不 not μὴ」，以反面的句子直接指導信徒。

²⁰ cf. v.3, v.4, v.7

解釋中，聖潔被解為「分開 Separation」，但這並不全面。若解釋為「人持著積極的心志(包括道德)，去採納或實行合神心意的敬拜」，這這解釋更為貼合希臘文的豐富原意。

- 從 4:2 至 4:7 這段落中，我們會發現作者不住地運用 ”For (γάρ)” (Conjunctive statement) 一詞，去介紹出作信徒的本身質素 (Conjunctive in Conditional/Explanatory usage) ，

4:2 - For you know [Commands] ...

4:3 - For this is God's will ...

4:7 - For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness

- 而進一步，4:2 – 8 可分為兩部份:(1) 4:2-6 及(2) 4:7-8

其中 4:6，是作為 4:2-5 節的小結；而 4:8 則為 4:7 結

語，同時也是 4:1 – 7 的總言(留心 4:8 乃用上了“所以” (Therefore – NRSV / Consequently – NET)作總論開首)

- 從這個分析來看，vv.6& 8 構成了以下兩個重點:

(1)不要越分，也不要欺負弟兄姊妹，因為主耶穌是察看和追究 (avenger)的(4:6)

(2)有人在世上棄絕其他人，基本上因為他 / 她原初就是棄絕神(4:8)

- 信徒有好行為，有聖潔的靈命，全因為他 / 她能尊主耶穌為主，也因此必定生活出討神喜悅的行事為人作風和態度。(4:1)

思想:信徒有好行為，非信徒也有好行為，那麼有甚麼分別呢？

信徒是先有好行為才有信神的心，還是先有委身於神才有好行為呢？我們若已有神的生命，為何有時還會活像未信的人一樣呢？原因何在？我們應如何解決呢？

(II)論弟兄姊妹相愛(4:9 – 12)

(4:9-10a) - 4:1 – 8 所有的教訓，是重申帖撒羅尼迦教會過去已得的屬靈位分(Spiritual Position)，而 4:9 節開始，是從他們既有的基礎上，把討論延伸 / 延續至未來。所以開始時就轉用 “Now (δέ)” 說明這一個延續(Continuative Conjunction)。但需留意，4:10 中的 δέ 乃譯為 BUT –NRSV，是相反強調的語氣(Adversative Conjunction Usage) ，

- 這一個延續的題目，是有關「弟兄姊妹相愛」的運用，其中有以下特點:

(1)不用任何人再多寫多談已經知道(4:9b)

- 從下文可知他們對已死的信徒在永恆的命運，可見他們對人的關心和愛心是毫無置疑的。

(2)他們知道，茲因神親身教導訓誨(4:9c)

(4:10b - 11)- 保羅再向帖撒羅尼迦的信徒提出，應如何繼續活出弟兄姊妹相愛，其中用了四句 infinitive phrases 去介紹:

1. to do so more and more(更加勉勵) → 不要因之前的好見證而自滿或停止見證。

2. to aspire to lead a quiet life(立志作安靜人) → 不要「百足那麼

多爪」弄至身心疲累。²¹

3. to attend to your own business(辦自己的事)→ 專心一致，不要三八(八卦)²²

4. to work with your hands(親手做工) → 不假手於人，凡事親力親為，彼此合作。²³

- 另有釋經家指出，如 R.F. Hock，提出有關“立志作安靜人”和“辦自己的事”的解釋，很可能是保羅勸導帖撒羅尼迦的信徒，要遠離當時公開的政治生活，尤其在先前的帖撒羅尼迦城政教紛爭之後，勸導信徒不要參與政治。可是這種解釋，並不切合保羅的一貫事奉神的取向，因此，這是一個並不可取的解釋，反而，叫信徒克守合聖徒的身份的解釋更為可取。

(4:12) - 按照保羅在 4:10b – 11 的提出，有一個明確的結果：

1. 向外人行事端正(Live a decent life before outsiders)

2. 沒有甚麼缺乏²⁴(Not be in need)

思想：誰是我們的生命指導(Life Mentor)？我們應住那裡去找我們的屬靈老師 / 指導？

甚麼是端正的生命(a decent life – NET / behave properly - NRSV)?

(III)論盼望的實現(4:13 - 18)

4 : 13 句中的 δέ(Now - NET ; But - NRSV)是繼續提到往後信徒的生活，但卻轉移了主題，由在生的弟兄姊妹到已死去的弟兄姊妹。

留心：這一段經文往往被信徒及研究聖經的人獨立抽出作末世的介紹，但這段本身是承接弟兄姊妹相愛的題目的延續！

- 此文亦可能在以下的兩個背景中發生：

1. 有信徒因死前沒有受浸(此乃猜測，由於保羅在本信的重申中，似乎有意只談信主得盼望的事)，又或有信徒對已死的信徒深深傷懷，不知他們死後去向(4:13c)，所以保羅在此詳作介紹。
2. 另或當日受到由別樣宗教信仰而帶來的死後觀攪擾，因此保羅在神的特別啓示下，再向帖撒羅尼迦教會一一介紹，免誤信異道。

- 保羅希望知會帖撒羅尼迦教會的原因不明，但可肯定的事，是他的中心點是「有指望」，特別是指到那些「已睡了的弟兄姊妹」，他們仍是在指望之中，那麼在生的信徒，也應是如此，不應只停留在「憂傷」(grieve)之中。

Word Study (cf. NET): 「睡了」(κοιμάω)原義是睡覺一詞，但這裡乃用作相關語(Euphemism)，意指「信徒的死」，是有像徵的含意(Metaphorical Usage)，有等候將來復活(resurrection)的意味。

4:14 - 此節列出能「與耶穌基督一同帶來(Bring us through Jesus)」的條件，就是信

²¹ cf. 書 23:1 徒 19:36; 林前 14:33; 帖後 3:11-12; 羅 14:12; 腓 2:4, 21; 提前 5:11-16

²² cf. 帖後 3:11ff; 提前 5:13; 羅 12:17(美事也要留心去作。)

²³ cf. 帖後 3:10ff

²⁴ 所謂“沒有甚麼缺乏”是指「不用連累他人 或 不會依賴物質 或 不再拖累 或 不會苛索教會肢體」

基督死和復活——這一盼望。
- 信基督死後復活 i.e. 盼望的源頭。

4:15 - 17 - 保羅更介紹到這個「死而復活²⁵」的盼望，有它實現的進程。

- A. 簡介: 1. 仍活在世上的人要存留到主降臨的時刻。
2. 這些仍活著的信徒，不能在已經睡了的信徒以先被接到主耶穌那裡。
- B. 詳情: 1. 主必親自降臨(有呼叫聲從天而下，又有號響²⁶) v. 16
2. 在基督裡死了(睡了)的人必先復活 v. 16
3. 仍活著的信徒與睡了又復活的信徒要一同被提到雲²⁷裡，在空中與主相遇 v. 17
4. 與主永遠同在 v. 17

留意：

(1) 中文和合本中用到「必」一字，說明那種肯定的語氣(Realized mood)。但英文譯本中，皆運用未來式的語調(will...)。依照原文所指出的，由 4:1 - 14a，皆以 aorist(過去式)的語法，而 4:15 開始以現在及過去式交替使用，而由 4:15 - 17 節中，就開始運用 Future Middle Indicative(未來自主式)或 Future Passive Indication (未來被動式)的記述語法作出闡述。從此可見，保羅的末世觀是 Realized BUT NOT YET，即「部份已實現，但仍然有未來彰顯的部份」。

(2) 有關 4:15 中「我們現在照主的話」一句片語，可參 NET 的註腳 #18:

#18 The word of the Lord is a technical expression in OT literature, often referring to a divine prophetic utterance (e.g., Gen 15:1, Isa 1:10, Jonah 1:1). In the NT it occurs 15 times: 3 times as ῥῆμα τοῦ κυρίου (ῥῆμα του κυριου; Luke 22:61, Acts 11:16, 1 Pet 1:25) and 12 times as λόγος τοῦ κυρίου (λογος του κυριου; here and in Acts 8:25; 13:44, 48, 49; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 19:10, 20; 1 Thes 1:8; 2 Thes 3:1). As in the OT, this phrase focuses on the prophetic nature and divine origin of what has been said.

在這註腳，一方面證明了「照主的話」是有舊約聖經的來源，另一方面也證明這些有關主再來的教訓，並不一定是源自耶穌的說話教訓，反而很可能是耶和華神自己在遠古舊約中的宣告。

既然這番話的主旨是「安慰」，安慰那些關心已死信徒卻仍在世的帖撒羅尼迦信徒，可見“安慰之言”並非人的說話，而是神的說話，亦即聖經的內容。那麼我們作為基督徒，還需用其他諸如心理學或輔導學等科學分析的話叫人得安慰嗎？

²⁵ 有關「耶穌死而復活」的講法，在聖經來源批評學來講，相信是 Pre-Pauline 的福音 (Traditional/Pre-Pauline Formula)，皆因句中沒有用上“基督”的名銜，並且用“再次復活 ἀνάστη”形容，這都是非保羅慣常用語。cf. I. Havener, “Pre-Pauline Formulae Christological Creedal Formulae of 1 Thessalonians,” SBLSP 20 (1981) 111-113. & Martin, D. Michael, 1, 2 Thessalonians, NAC Series, vol. 33, Broadman, 145.

²⁶ 有關“號響”，早於舊約中出現，請參撒 13:3; 耶 4:5; 書 6:4-5; 士 6:34; 尼 4:19-20; 出 19:16, 19; 民 10:10; 利 23:24; 25:8; 賽 27:13; 亞 9:14; 斯 6:23.

²⁷ 被雲接到天上，於舊約聖經中，只有在但以理書 7:13 出現過，但至於神顯在雲中，卻可參考出 19:16; 24:15-18; 結 1:4, 28; 賽 19:1; 詩 97:2。

(3) 於羅馬天主教中的煉獄觀(Gehenna, Purgatory)，在本章中找不到任何支持的理據。

4:18 - 這節經文總括保羅有關末日被提的介紹目的，就是「彼此勸慰」(Encourage one another - NRSV/NET)。

思想: 1. 我們信耶穌，是否爲了得永生呢？

如果我們用這種觀念去實踐於生活之中，我們的生命會變成怎麼樣子的呢？

若果沒有永生，我們還會相信耶穌嗎？

2. 主內的肢體在生活中是主動的？還是被動的呢？兩者有何分別？

不同的肢體生活態度，會演變出怎樣的信仰群體呢？

註: NET : New English Translation Bible (www.bible.org)

NRSV : New Revised Standard Version

NIV : New International Version

TWOT : Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

NIDNTT : New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology

帖撒羅尼迦前書第五章(持續不住的屬靈生活)

在本章中，我們可以分為三個部份，第一部份主要是承接在第四章所談及的末世進程，從保羅的介紹可使帖撒羅尼迦教會了解到「把握救恩」的重要性。其後第二部份是講述日後信徒的行事藍圖，重點並非做甚麼，而是這些事情的背後神的旨意(5:18)，並顯示這些事態的逼切性，並且見到保羅對帖撒羅尼迦教會的祝福。最後的部份，附有一個傳道的命令(5:27)。

* 留心，這段經文經常以 $\delta\epsilon$ - Now(5:1, 3, 12, 23)作開始，有著逼切的感覺 / 含意。其實全書卷中，經常帶著這份逼切性。

本章分段大致如下：

(I) 5:1 – 11 警醒度日

(II) 5:12 – 24 信徒行事的藍圖與祝福

(III) 5:25 – 28 信末的囑咐

cf. Word Biblical Themes by L. Morris 1,2 Thessalonians

(I) 警醒度日 5:1 - 11

在這段落之中，保羅多次利用不同的圖像來形容末世的時代，以 Leon Morris 的介紹，當日很多信徒都持著不同形式的末世觀，正因為有不同的憶測，故此保羅有必要稍稍作出介紹。

從我個人了解，以圖像作為介紹的手法，有以下的好處和特色：

- (1) 圖像給人較容易理解一些未見之事，正如但以理書或舊約中的異象。令難以形容的事物，以圖示顯明。
- (2) 圖象內容多為生活熟識的事，所以能產生強烈的共鳴感(Resonance)。
- (3) 在受逼迫的情況下，圖象方式的溝通會比直述更加安全和方便。

其中運用了的圖象包括：

時候日期(Times and seasons – 5:1)；

賊 (Thief - 5:2)；

生產的婦女和痛苦(Labor pains on a pregnant woman – 5:3)；

光和黑 (Light and Darkness – 5:5)；

睡和酒醉(Sleep and Drunken – 5:6 - 7)；

護心鏡遮胸(Breastplate – 5:8)；

頭盔戴上(Helmet – 5:8)。

5:1 - 「論到時候 - 日期」這片語，有著末世(eschatological)的意味，若果與馬太福音 24:36a 的用詞平排細讀，我們會發現兩者皆是同出一轍的句子，是指末世的序幕與結束。而因為帖撒羅尼迦信徒仍然處身末世的時段(即末日之前)，這片語便帶有預表的意義。

*留心，中文翻譯上，兩句句子意思接近，但原文中是兩對不同的詞。

($\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma$ 日 - $\omega\rho\alpha\varsigma$ 時)馬太福音 vs ($\chi\rho\acute{o}\nu\omega\nu$ 片時 - $\kappa\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\omega}\nu$ 時令)帖撒羅尼迦前書

5:2 - 「主的日子」乃指在將來主再回來，施行祝福(拯救)與咒詛(審判)的日子。

參林前 1:8；5:5；賽 2:11 - 12；13:6 - 13)

- 至於「賊」的喻意，可參主耶穌於約翰福音 10:1 - 18 節中的相反運用，但兩處喻意“突然 / 不經不覺”的思想，大致相同。同時間，兩處經文都指出在夜晚出現。喻意隨時出現，尤其人不警覺的時候，故此有謹守度日的需要。

5:3 - 請參考耶利米書 6:14 和 8:11 中的描述，兩處經文與此節中的語調相同，都是一種「自我欺騙/掩耳盜鈴」的思想。

- 在此節經文的原文開始，有兩個字分別出現於不同的手抄本，分別是 (δέ- now)和 (γάρ - for)，於中文聖經中索性沒有翻譯出來。而按手抄本的可信程度來斷定，以 (δέ- now)較為可靠一點，亦與 5:1 節開首相同，有帶著末世逼切的意思。

- 留心，在聖經中曾多次提及生產的婦人(創 3:16，25:24，38:27ff，49:25，出 1:19，撒上 4:19，伯 39:2ff，馬太 24:8，約 16:21，羅 4:19，提前 2:15)。其中大意如下:

- (1)婦人生產必受大苦難，如受死般的災難
- (2)婦人的產難必不可免
- (3)婦人生產難日子總是不能決定(思想:剖腹生子是否合宜?)

5:4 - 此節與 5:2 節成爲對比的開始

- 此節的大意:“可是，弟兄姊妹你們雖然處身這個快被黑暗吞滅的時刻中，如賊所作的驚嚇一樣，但卻不屬這世界之中。”

5:5 - 這節乃解釋不屬黑暗世界的原因:

- (1)信徒是光明之子
- (2)信徒是白晝之子
- (3)光明之子和白晝之子不可能是黑暗之子和夜晚之子

- 留意，保羅先以「你們(you)」定明帖撒羅尼迦信徒的身份，之後以「我們(we)」，作爲全體基督徒的身份證明。這處正好回應前文有關那些已死了信徒的未來遭遇，他們雖然已經先死了，但末後也應和未死的信徒一樣，因爲我們信徒皆有同樣的身份 - 就是光明之子、白晝之子。 cf. 4:17; 詩 74:16 及本節。(留心光明之子、白晝之子與盼望的彼此關係!)

- 此節的寫作乃爲 Chiasm(交叉式)語句，富韻存調。

5:6 - 8 - 承接 5:4 和 5 兩節，5:6 至 8 節，就說明警醒度日的原因和表現

原因:光明之子、白晝之子

- 表現:
- (1)不像睡了醉了的人 (5:7)
 - (2)不願存留在黑暗夜間，因爲當中幽暗 (5:7)
 - (3)警醒謹守(Alert and sober - NET) (5:6)
 - (4)穿上信和愛做的護心鏡²⁸遮胸 (5:8)
 - (5)戴上得救的盼望做成的頭盔 (5:8) cf. 賽 59:17

5:9 - 11 - 這部份其實也是申述 5:5 中的光明之子和白晝之子的，顯明一個身份能構成 / 促成神拯救的目標 -- 與基督同活

²⁸ 參以弗所書 6:13-20; 另羅馬書 13:14 更直接指出這些軍裝，就是主耶穌基督/ 真理(Truth)。

- 這處「睡著(asleep)」一詞，相信是保羅刻意指 4:13-18 中，那些已死的信徒，他們只要與在世仍活的信徒有同樣的位份，結果都是一模一樣。

* 從這裡的介紹，可見保羅心目中，主再來的事，似乎是很快成就的事。

思想:我們被別人稱之為「基督徒」時，有沒有不想承認的念頭？我們之間有沒有彼此勸勉，互相建立同樣有光明之子和白晝之子的位份？互相預備和守望呢？

(II) 信徒行事的藍圖與祝福 5:12 - 24

在這段的開始，5:12, 14，語氣與 4:1 之中類同(ask & urge，勸戒)，勸導帖撒羅尼迦的信徒行出基督的旨意(5:18)，而 23 - 24 節中的祝福，更加總結了保羅願眾信徒最終達至的成果。

5:12 - 13 - 這兩節經文實質為一句句子，指出有兩方面需要小心對待一些在帖撒羅尼迦教會中有好好事奉的弟兄姊妹。

- 這些有好好事奉的弟兄姊妹被形容為 (本文用上了三個分詞 Participles):

1. 在帖撒羅尼迦教會中勞苦作工 **κοπιῶντας** (5:12 & 13)
2. 在主裡面治理帖撒羅尼迦教會 **προϊσταμένους** (5:12)
3. 在主裡面勸戒帖撒羅尼迦教會 **νουθετοῦντας** (5:12)

- 有關小心對待的兩方面:

1. 敬重(Acknowledge, **οἶδα**)²⁹他們 (5:12)
2. 尊重(Esteem, **ἡγέομαι**)³⁰他們(以最高的愛心) (5:13)

5:14 (修補) - 承 5:12-13 針對有好事奉的信徒的教導，這節則針對那些沒有健康成長的信徒，對於這些人，帖撒羅尼迦教會應有的處理態度和事奉是：

1. 警戒不守規則的人
2. 勉勵灰心的人
3. 扶助軟弱的人
4. 向眾人忍耐

5:15-18 (實踐方式) - 這幾節說明了基督耶穌奉父神來到世界的事奉中，其中有一個重要目標，就是「不以惡報惡」，相反有四項「經常」有的行事態度：

1. 經常為到別人的好處著想
2. 經常喜樂
3. 經常持續祈禱
4. 經常為各樣(好與壞)的事情衷心感謝

5:19-21 - 在屬靈事上的應有態度:

1. 不消滅聖靈 (5:19)
2. 不藐視先知的講道 (5:20) cf. 哥林多前書 14:1
3. 各事都需鑑察³¹ (5:21)
4. 持守美善的事物 (5:21)
5. 遠離各樣惡狀 (5:21) cf. “Form of Evil” (NET)

²⁹ 請參考以弗所書 5:5; 哥林多前書 1:16; 本詞原意是「知道」、「確認」，而這處更有「對人作出合而的尊重」。

³⁰ 另參使徒行傳 14:12; 此詞包含「考慮」、「關懷」、「管治」。

³¹ 原文是 **δοκιμάζετε**，含「洞悉」的意義，(x17/x22 是用於保羅書信中)，羅 1:28; 2:18; 12:2; 林前 11:28。

- 5:23 - 24 - 總結對帖撒羅尼迦信徒應有的態度和事奉，保羅把他對這群信徒的心願或者最終成果歸納於他的一項祝福之中。在「神的平安」³² 中：
1. 完全聖潔(全然成聖)
 2. 在基督耶穌再來的時候，全人(靈魂體)完全無可指摘
 3. 被基督認為是可靠賴的人(Trustworthy - NET)/ 有信的人(Faithful - NRSV)
- 留意這節的最後一句「他必成就這事」，究竟所指的是誰做這事呢？成就了甚麼事呢？這處相信是「基督」會成就「這事」，但「這事」是指那些事呢？根據上文所言，應該是 5:23 中的一切事，簡而言之，即成就「神的平安」在信徒中間。
- 從這裡可見，保羅再次指出我們得到成聖，及至完全和可靠賴，也全因為基督耶穌，並且在「過去、現在、將來」都有著其影響力。
- 註：另這兩節經文與 3:11 - 13 形成一項 *inclusio* 的平行祝願。
- 思想：1. 比照一下由 5:12 - 21 中的介紹，我們今天過著的聖徒生活是否及格(Up-to-Standard)呢？
2. 有那一方面仍需要努力和補足呢？
 3. 我們當基督徒的目標與保羅在最後祝福中的介紹，有否含接呢？
 4. 基督耶穌是怎樣拯救我呢？是救了我一部份，還是全人也獲救呢？
 5. 若果是全人獲救，為甚麼我們的「屬靈生命」仍是千瘡百孔呢？

(III)信末的囑咐 5:25 - 28

通常來說，保羅都以祝福為信的結束，但保羅在此處再次加上囑咐及第二個祝福，可見保羅的情懷與帖撒羅尼迦信徒緊密連繫。

- 5:25 - 原本為「請弟兄們“也”為我們禱告」，指出在帖撒羅尼迦信徒的日常禱告中，也不要忘記為保羅等代禱。
- 在帖撒羅尼迦全書中，有關禱告的有：兩次感恩禱告(1:2-10, 2:13)，兩次代求(3:11 - 13, 5:23)，一次祈禱報告(3:10)，一次勸勉不住禱告(5:17)及一次代禱要求(5:25) cf. 馮蔭坤《帖撒羅尼迦前書》天道聖經註釋 476.
- 5:26 - 這裡有關「親咀問安」應譯為「以聖潔的親吻向所有弟兄問安」，主要是「問安」，而並非「聖潔的親吻」。
- 有關「吻」一詞，此處沒有多大註解，但按新舊約的背景，親吻是當日的一項交誼問安的表示，再加上當日在猶太人社群中，男女分座，故此這處並沒有任何兩性接吻的解釋，而只局限於同性。
- 5:27 - 保羅如此囑咐，乃希望在帖撒羅尼迦城中的各弟兄姊妹，同樣可以了解到保羅對他們的教導與關心，同心建造教會。
- 5:28 - 全信的結束祝福慣用語(cf. 腓立比書 4:23；加拉太書 6:18；林前 16:23 及林後 13:14)。

³² 「平安」 --> 指一種健全的狀態，其中包括與神和好(羅 5:1；14:17)，彼此和睦(羅 14:19；帖前 3:17；林前 7:15, 14:33；弗 2:15, 4:3)，內心得享平安(羅 15:13；加 5:22；腓 4:7)，所以，「平安」一詞，可指神藉著基督所成就的救恩(羅 8:6；帖前 2:10)，使所信的人進入到平安之中，與父神得到完全的修和。(Reference Source: 馮蔭坤之天道聖經註釋「帖撒羅尼迦前書」 pp.387) 按約 14，主耶穌更指出祂只把兩樣事物留下給我們，除「聖靈(14:16)」之外，另外的就是「平安(14:27)」。

ESCHATOLOGY. From Gk. ἔσχατος, ‘last’, the term refers to the ‘doctrine of the last things’. (Source: New Bible Dictionary, Nelson Bible Software, 333-9)

In contrast to cyclical conceptions of history, the biblical writings understand history as a linear movement towards a goal. God is driving history towards the ultimate fulfilment of his purposes for his creation. So biblical eschatology is not limited to the destiny of the individual; it concerns the consummation of the whole history of the world, towards which all God’s redemptive acts in history are directed.

I. The OT perspective

The forward-looking character of Israelite faith dates from the call of Abraham (Gn. 12:1–3) and the promise of the land, but it is in the message of the prophets that it becomes fully eschatological, looking towards a final and permanent goal of God’s purpose in history. The prophetic term ‘the Day of the Lord’ (with a Variety of similar expressions such as ‘on that day’) refers to the coming event of God’s decisive action in judgment and salvation in the historical realm. For the prophets it is always immediately related to their Present historical context, and by no means necessarily refers to the end of history. Increasingly, however, there emerges the concept of a final resolution of history: a day of judgment beyond which God establishes a permanent age of salvation. A fully transcendent eschatology, which expects a direct and universal act of God, beyond the possibilities of ordinary history, issuing in a radically transformed world, is characteristic of *APOCALYPTIC, which is already to be found in several parts of the prophetic books.

The prophets frequently depict the eschatological age of salvation which lies on the far side of judgment. Fundamentally it is the age in which God’s will is to prevail. The nations will serve the God of Israel and learn his will (Is. 2:2f. = Mi. 4:1f.; Je. 3:17; Zp. 3:9f.; Zc. 8:20–23). There will be international peace and justice (Is. 2:4 = Mi. 4:3) and peace in nature (Is. 11:6; 65:25). God’s people will have security (Mi. 4:4; Is. 65:21–23) and prosperity (Zc. 8:12). The law of God will be written on their hearts (Je. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:26f.).

Frequently associated with the eschatological age is the Davidic king who will rule Israel (and, sometimes, the nations) as God’s representative (Is. 9:6f.; 11:1–10; Je. 23:5f.; Ezk. 34:23f.; 37:24f.; Mi. 5:2–4; Zc. 9:9f.). A principal feature of these prophecies is that the Messiah will rule in *righteousness*. (In the OT itself ‘Messiah’ [Christ] is not yet used as a technical term for the eschatological king.) Other ‘Messianic’ figures in the OT hope are the ‘one like a son of man’ (Dn. 7:13), the heavenly representative of Israel who receives universal dominion, the suffering Servant (Is. 53), and the eschatological prophet (Is. 61:1–3). Commonly the eschatological act of judgment and salvation is accomplished by the personal coming of God himself (Is. 26:21; Zc. 14:5; Mal. 3:1–5).

Gk. Greek
OT Old Testament
f. and the following (verse, etc.)

II. The NT perspective

The distinctive character of NT eschatology is determined by the conviction that in the history of Jesus Christ God's decisive eschatological act has already taken place, though in such a way that the consummation remains still future. There is in NT eschatology both an 'already' of accomplished fulfilment and a 'not yet' of still outstanding promise. There is both a 'realized' and a 'future' aspect to NT eschatology, which is therefore probably best described by the term '*inaugurated eschatology*'.

The note of eschatological fulfilment already under way means that OT eschatology has become, in a measure, present reality for the NT. The 'last days' of the prophets have arrived: for Christ 'was made manifest at the end of the times' (1 Pet. 1:20); God 'in these last days ... has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb. 1:2); Christians are those 'upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor. 10:11); 'it is the last hour' (1 Jn. 2:18); *cf.* also Acts 2:17; Heb. 6:5. On the other hand, NT writers oppose the fantasy that fulfilment is already complete (2 Tim. 2:18).

It is important to preserve the theological unity of God's redemptive work, past, present and future, 'already' and 'not yet'. Too often traditional theology has kept these aspects apart, as the finished work of Christ on the one hand, and the 'last things' on the other. In the NT perspective the 'last things' began with the ministry of Jesus. The historical work of Christ ensures, requires and points us forward to the future consummation of God's kingdom. The Christian hope for the future arises out of the historical work of Christ. The Christian church lives between the 'already' and the 'not yet', caught up in the ongoing process of eschatological fulfilment.

Inaugurated eschatology is found already in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. Jesus modifies the purely future expectation of Jewish apocalyptic by his message that the eschatological rule of God has already drawn near (Mt. 3:17). Its power is already at work in Jesus' deeds of victory over the realm of evil (Mt. 12:28f.). In Jesus' own person and mission the kingdom of God is present (Lk. 17:20f.), demanding response, so that a man's participation in the future of the kingdom is determined by his response to Jesus in the present (Mt. 10:32f.). Thus Jesus makes the kingdom a present reality which nevertheless remains future (Mk. 9:1; 14:25).

The eschatological character of Jesus' mission was confirmed by his resurrection. Resurrection is an eschatological event, belonging to the OT expectation of man's final destiny. So the unexpected resurrection of the one man Jesus ahead of all others determined the church's conviction that the End had already begun. He is risen already as the 'first fruits' of the dead (1 Cor. 15:20). On behalf of his people, Jesus has already entered upon the eternal life of the eschatological age; he has pioneered the way (Heb. 12:2) so that others may follow. In Paul's terms, he is the 'last Adam' (1 Cor. 15:45), the eschatological Man. For all other men eschatological salvation now means sharing *his* eschatological humanity, *his* resurrection life.

So for NT writers, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the absolutely decisive eschatological event which determines the Christian hope for the future: see, *e.g.*, Acts 17:31; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thes. 4:14. This accounts for the second distinctive feature of NT eschatology. As well as its characteristic tension of 'already' and 'not yet', NT eschatology is

NT New Testament
cf. *confer* (Lat.), compare

distinctive in being wholly 3 The role of Jesus in NT eschatology goes far beyond the role of the Messiah in OT or later Jewish expectation. Certainly he is the heavenly Son of man (Dn. 7), the eschatological prophet (Is. 61; *cf.* Lk. 4:18–21), the suffering Servant (Is. 53), and even the Davidic king, though not in the way his contemporaries expected. But the NT's concentration of eschatological fulfilment in Jesus reflects not only his fulfilment of these particular eschatological roles. For NT theology, Jesus embodies both God's own work of eschatological salvation and also man's eschatological destiny. So he is, on the one hand, the Saviour and the Judge, the Conqueror of evil, the Agent of God's rule and the Mediator of God's eschatological presence to men: he is himself the fulfilment of the OT expectations of God's own eschatological coming (*cf.* Mal. 3:1 with Lk. 1:76; 7:27). On the other hand, he is also the eschatological Man: he has achieved and defines in his own risen humanity the eschatological destiny of all men. So now the most adequate statement of our destiny is that we shall be like him (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2). For both these reasons the Christian hope is focused on the coming of Jesus Christ.

In all the NT writings, eschatology has these two distinctive characteristics: it is inaugurated and Christ-centred. There are, however, differences of emphasis, especially in the balance of 'already' and 'not yet'. The Fourth Gospel lays a heavy weight of emphasis both on realized eschatology and on the identification of eschatological salvation with Jesus himself (see, *e.g.*, 11:23–26), but does not eliminate the future expectation (5:28f.; 6:39, *etc.*).

III. Christian life in hope

The Christian lives between the 'already' and the 'not yet', between the resurrection of Christ and the future general resurrection at the coming of Christ. This accounts for the distinctive structure of Christian existence, founded on the finished work of Christ in the historical past and at the same time living in the hope of the future which is kindled and guaranteed by that past history itself. The structure is seen, *e.g.*, in the Lord's Supper, where the risen Lord is present with his people in an act of 'remembrance' of his death, which is at the same time a symbolic anticipation of the eschatological banquet of the future, witnessing therefore to the hope of his coming.

The time between the 'already' and the 'not yet' is the time of the Spirit and the time of the church. The Spirit is the eschatological gift promised by the prophets (Acts 2:16–18), by which Christians already participate in the eternal life of the age to come. The Spirit creates the church, the eschatological people of God, who have already been transferred from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). Through the Spirit in the church the life of the age to come is already being lived in the midst of the history of this present evil age (Gal. 1:4). Thus, in a sense, the new age and the old age overlap; the new humanity of the last Adam co-exists with the old humanity of the first Adam. By faith we know that the old is passing and under judgment, and the future lies with the new reality of Christ.

The process of eschatological fulfilment in the overlap of the ages involves the mission of the church, which fulfils the universalism of the OT hope. The death and resurrection of Christ are an eschatological event of universal significance which must, however, be universally realized in history, through the church's world-wide proclamation of the gospel (Mt. 28:18–20; Mk. 13:10; Col. 1:23).

The line between the new age and the old does not, however, run simply between the church and the world; it runs through the church and through the individual Christian life. We are always in transition from the old to the new, living in the eschatological tension of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’. We are saved and yet we still await salvation. God has justified us, *i.e.* he has anticipated the verdict of the last judgment by declaring us acquitted through Christ. Yet we still ‘wait for the hope of righteousness’ (Gal. 5:5). God has given us the Spirit by which we share Christ’s resurrection life. But the Spirit is still only the first instalment (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) of the eschatological inheritance, the down-payment which guarantees the full payment. The Spirit is the first fruits (Rom. 8:23) of the full harvest. Therefore in present Christian existence we still know the warfare of flesh and Spirit (Gal. 5:13–26), the struggle within us between the nature we owe to the first Adam and the new nature we owe to the last Adam. We still await the redemption of our bodies at the resurrection (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:44–50), and perfection is still the goal towards which we strive (Phil. 3:10–14). The tension of ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ is an existential reality of Christian life.

For the same reason the Christian life involves suffering. In this age Christians must share Christ’s sufferings, so that in the age to come they may share his glory (Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Thes. 1:4f.; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:10; Rev. 2:10), *i.e.* ‘glory’ belongs to the ‘not yet’ of Christian existence. This is both because we are still in this mortal body, and also because the church is still in the world of Satan’s dominion. Its mission is therefore inseparable from persecution, as Christ’s was (Jn. 15:18–20).

It is important to notice that NT eschatology is never mere information about the future. The future hope is always relevant to Christian life in the present. It is therefore repeatedly made the basis of exhortations to Christian living appropriate to the Christian hope (Mt. 5:3–10, 24f.; Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Cor. 7:26–31; 15:58; 1 Thes. 5:1–11; Heb. 10:32–39; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2f.). Christian life is characterized by its orientation towards the time when God’s rule will finally prevail universally (Mt. 6:10), and Christians will therefore stand for that reality against all the apparent dominance of evil in this age. They will *wait* for that day in solidarity with the eager longing of the whole creation (Rom. 8:18–25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Jude 21), and they will suffer with *patient endurance* the contradictions of the present. Steadfast endurance is the virtue which the NT most often associates with Christian hope (Mt. 10:22; 24:13; Rom. 8:25; 1 Thes. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 6:11f.; 10:36; Jas. 5:7–11; Rev. 1:9; 13:10; 14:12). Through the tribulation of the present age, Christians endure, even rejoicing (Rom. 12:12), in the strength of their hope which, founded on the resurrection of the crucified Christ, assures them that the way of the cross is the way to the kingdom. Christians whose hope is focused on the permanent values of God’s coming kingdom will be freed from the bondage of this world’s materialistic values (Mt. 6:33; 1 Cor. 7:29–31; Phil. 3:18–21; Col. 3:1–4). Christians whose hope is that Christ will finally present them perfect before his Father (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thes. 3:13; Jude 24) will strive towards that perfection in the present (Phil. 3:12–15; Heb. 12:14; 2 Pet. 3:11–14; 1 Jn. 3:3). They will live *vigilantly* (Mt. 24:42–44; 25:1–13; Mk. 13:33–37; Lk. 21:34–36; 1 Thes. 5:1–11; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 16:15), like servants who daily expect the return of their master (Lk. 12:35–48).

The Christian hope is not utopian. The kingdom of God will not be built by human effort; it is God’s own act. Nevertheless, because the kingdom represents the perfect realization of God’s will for human society, it will also be the motive for Christian social action in the present. The kingdom is anticipated now primarily in the church, the community of those who acknowledge the King, but Christian social action for the realization of God’s will in society at large will also

be a sign of the coming kingdom. Those who pray for the coming of the kingdom (Mt. 6:10) cannot fail to act out that prayer so far as it is possible. They will do so, however, with that eschatological realism which recognizes that all anticipations of the kingdom in this age will be provisional and imperfect, that the coming kingdom must never be confused with the social and political structures of this age (Lk. 22:25–27; Jn. 18:36), and the latter will not infrequently embody satanic opposition to the kingdom (Rev. 13:17). In this way Christians will not be disillusioned by human failure but continue to trust the promise of God. Human utopianism must rediscover its true goal in Christian hope, not vice versa.

IV. Signs of the times

The NT consistently represents the coming of Christ as imminent (Mt. 16:28; 24:33; Rom. 13:11f.; 1 Cor. 7:29; Jas. 5:8f.; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 1:1; 22:7, 10, 12, 20). This temporal imminence is, however, qualified by the expectation that certain events must happen ‘first’ (Mt. 24:14; 2 Thes. 2:2–8), and especially by clear teaching that the date of the end cannot be known in advance (Mt. 24:36, 42; 25:13; Mk. 13:32f.; Acts 1:7). All calculation is ruled out, and Christians live in daily expectation precisely because the date cannot be known. Imminence has less to do with dates than with the *theological* relationship of future fulfilment to the past history of Christ and the present situation of Christians. The ‘already’ promises, guarantees, demands the ‘not yet’, and so the coming of Christ exercises a continuous pressure on the present, motivating Christian life towards it. This theological relationship accounts for the characteristic foreshortening of perspective in Jesus’ prophecy of the judgment of Jerusalem (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21) and John’s prophecy of the judgment of pagan Rome (Rev.); both these judgments are foreseen as events of the final triumph of God’s kingdom, because theologically they are such, whatever the chronological gap between them and the end. It is because God’s kingdom is coming that the powers of this world are judged even within the history of this age. All such judgments anticipate the final judgment.

As the church’s future, the coming of Christ must inspire the church’s present, however near or distant in time it may be. In this sense, therefore, the Christian hope in the NT is unaffected by the so-called ‘delay of the *parousia*’ which some scholars have conjectured as a major feature in early Christian theological development. The ‘delay’ is explicitly reflected only in 2 Pet. 3:1–10 (*cf.* also Jn. 21:22f.): there it is shown to have its own theological rationale in God’s merciful forbearance (*cf.* Rom. 2:4).

Some exegetes think the NT provides ‘signs’ by which the church will be warned of the approach of the end (*cf.* Mt. 24:3). The strongest support for this idea comes from Jesus’ parable of the fig tree, with its lesson (Mt. 24:32f.; Mk. 13:28f.; Lk. 21:28–31). Yet the signs in question seem to be either the fall of Jerusalem (Lk. 21:5–7, 20–24), which, while it signals the coming of the end, provides no *temporal* indication, or characteristics of the whole of this age from the resurrection of Christ to the end: false teachers (Mt. 24:4f., 11, 24f.; *cf.* 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–9; 2 Pet. 1–3; 1 Jn. 2:18f.; 4:3); wars (Mt. 24:6f.; *cf.* Rev. 6:4); natural disasters (Mt. 24:7; *cf.* Rev. 6:5–8); persecution of the church (Mt. 24:9f.; *cf.* Rev. 6:9–11), and the world-wide preaching of the gospel (Mt. 24:14). All these are signs by which the church at every period of history knows that it lives in the end-time, but they do not provide an eschatological timetable. Only the coming of Christ itself is unmistakably the end (Mt. 24:27–30).

The NT does, however, expect the time of the church's witness to reach a final climax in the appearance of *ANTICHRIST and a period of unparalleled tribulation (Mt. 24:21f.; Rev. 3:10; 7:14). Paul certainly treats the non-appearance of Antichrist as an indication that the end is not yet (2 Thes. 2:3–12).

Antichrist represents the principle of satanic opposition to God's rule active throughout history (*e.g.* in the persecution of Jewish believers under Antiochus Epiphanes: Dn. 8:9–12, 23–25; 11:21ff.), but especially in the last times, the age of the church (1 Jn. 2:18). Christ's victory over evil, already achieved in principle, is manifest in this age primarily in the suffering witness of the church; only at the end will his victory be complete in the elimination of the powers of evil. Therefore in this age the success of the church's witness is always accompanied by the mounting violence of satanic opposition (*cf.* Rev. 12).

Evil will reach its final crescendo in the final Antichrist, who is both a false Messiah or prophet, inspired by Satan to perform false miracles (2 Thes. 2:9; *cf.* Mt. 24:24; Rev. 13:11–15), and a persecuting political power blasphemously claiming divine honours (2 Thes. 2:4; *cf.* Dn. 8:9–12, 23–25; 11:30–39; Mt. 24:15; Rev. 13:5–8). It is noteworthy that, while Paul provides a sketch of this human embodiment of evil (2 Thes. 2:3–12), other NT references find Antichrist already present in heretical teachers (1 Jn. 2:18f., 22; 4:3) or in the religio-political pretensions of the persecuting Roman empire (Rev. 13). The climax is anticipated in every great crisis of the church's history.

V. The coming of Christ

Christian hope is focused on the coming of Christ, which may be called his 'second' coming (Heb. 9:28). Thus the OT term, 'the *DAY OF THE LORD', which the NT uses for the event of final fulfilment (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; *cf.* 'the day of God', 2 Pet. 3:12; 'the great day of God the Almighty', Rev. 16:14), is characteristically 'the day of the Lord Jesus' (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; *cf.* 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16).

The coming of Christ is called his *παρουσια* ('coming'), his *αποκαλψπισσ* ('revelation') and his *επισηανεια* ('appearing'). The word *παρουσια* means 'presence' or 'arrival', and was used in Hellenistic Greek of the visits of gods and rulers. Christ's *παρουσια* will be a personal coming of the same Jesus of Nazareth who ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11); but it will be a universally evident event (Mt. 24:27), a coming in power and glory (Mt. 24:30), to destroy Antichrist and evil (2 Thes. 2:8), to gather his people, living and dead (Mt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 4:14–17; 2 Thes. 2:1), and to judge the world (Mt. 25:31; Jas. 5:9).

His coming will also be an *αποκαλψπισσ*, an 'unveiling' or 'disclosure', when the power and glory which are now his by virtue of his exaltation and heavenly session (Phil. 2:9; Eph. 1:20–23; Heb. 2:9) will be disclosed to the world. Christ's reign as Lord, now invisible to the world, will then be made visible by his *αποκαλψπισσ*.

VI. The *RESURRECTION

ff. and the following (verses, *etc.*)

At the coming of Christ, the Christian dead will be raised (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 4:16) and those who are alive at the time will be transformed (1 Cor. 15:52; *cf.* 1 Thes. 4:17), *i.e.* they will pass into the same resurrection existence without dying.

Belief in the resurrection of the dead is found already in a few OT texts (Is. 25:8; 26:19; Dn. 12:2) and is common in the intertestamental literature. Both Jesus (Mk. 12:18–27) and Paul (Acts 23:6–8) agreed on this point with the Pharisees against the Sadducees, who denied resurrection. The Christian expectation of resurrection, however, is based decisively on the resurrection of Jesus, from which God is known as ‘God who raises the dead’ (2 Cor. 1:9). Jesus, in his resurrection, ‘abolished death and brought life and immortality to light’ (2 Tim. 1:10). He is ‘the living one’, who died and is now alive for ever, who has ‘the keys of death’ (Rev. 1:18).

Jesus’ resurrection was no mere re-animation of a corpse. It was entry into eschatological life, a transformed existence beyond the reach of death. As such it was the beginning of the eschatological resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). The fact of Jesus’ resurrection already guarantees the future resurrection of Christians at his coming (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:20–23; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thes. 4:14).

Eschatological life, the risen life of Christ, is already communicated to Christians in this age by his Spirit (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:11; Eph. 2:5f.; Col. 2:12; 3:1), and this too is a guarantee of their future resurrection (Jn. 11:26; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:18; 5:4f.). But the Spirit’s transformation of Christians into the glorious image of Christ is incomplete in this age because their bodies remain mortal. The future resurrection will be the completion of their transformation into Christ’s image, characterized by incorruption, glory and power (1 Cor. 15:42–44). The resurrection existence is not ‘flesh and blood’ (1 Cor. 15:20) but a ‘spiritual body’ (15:44), *i.e.* a body wholly vitalized and transformed by the Spirit of the risen Christ. From 1 Cor. 15:35–54 it is clear that the continuity between this present existence and resurrection life is the continuity of the personal self, independent of physical identity.

In NT thought, immortality belongs intrinsically to God alone (1 Tim. 6:16), while men by their descent from Adam are naturally mortal (Rom. 5:12). Eternal life is the gift of God to men through the resurrection of Christ. Only in Christ and by means of their future resurrection will men attain that full eschatological life which is beyond the reach of death. Resurrection is therefore equivalent to man’s final attainment of eschatological salvation.

It follows that the damned will not be raised in this full sense of resurrection to eternal life. The resurrection of the damned is mentioned only occasionally in Scripture (Dn. 12:2; Jn. 5:28f.; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5, 12f.; *cf.* Mt. 12:41f.), as the means of their condemnation at the judgment.

VII. The state of the dead

The Christian hope for life beyond death is not based on the belief that part of man survives death. All men, through their descent from Adam, are naturally mortal. Immortality is the gift of God, which will be attained through the resurrection of the whole person.

The Bible therefore takes death seriously. It is not an illusion. It is the consequence of sin (Rom. 5:12; 6:23), an evil (Dt. 30:15, 19) from which men shrink in terror (Ps. 55:4f.). It is an

enemy of God and man, and resurrection is therefore God's great victory over death (1 Cor. 15:54–57). Death is 'the last enemy to be destroyed' (1 Cor. 15:26), abolished in principle at Christ's resurrection (2 Tim. 1:10), to be finally abolished at the end (Rev. 20:14; *cf.* Is. 25:8). Only because Christ's resurrection guarantees their future resurrection are Christians delivered from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14f.) and able to see it as a sleep from which they will awaken (1 Thes. 4:13f.; 5:10) or even a departing to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23).

The OT pictures the state of the dead as existence in Sheol, the grave or the underworld. But existence in Sheol is not life. It is a land of darkness (Jb. 10:21f.) and silence (Ps. 115:17), in which God is not remembered (Pss. 6:5; 30:9; 88:11; Is. 38:18). The dead in Sheol are cut off from God (Ps. 88:5), the source of life. Only occasionally does the OT attain a hope of real life beyond death, *i.e.* life out of reach of Sheol in the presence of God (Pss. 16:10f.; 49:15; 73:24; perhaps Jb. 19:25f.). Probably the example of *ENOCH (Gn. 5:24; *cf.* Elijah, 2 Ki. 2:11) helped stimulate this hope. A clear doctrine of resurrection is found only in Is. 26:19; Dn. 12:2.

'Hades' is the NT equivalent of Sheol (Mt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13f.), in most cases referring to death or the power of death. In Lk. 16:23 it is the place of torment for the wicked after death, in accordance with some contemporary Jewish thinking, but it is doubtful whether this parabolic use of current ideas can be treated as teaching about the state of the dead. 1 Pet. 3:19 calls the dead who perished in the Flood 'the spirits in prison' (*cf.* 4:6).

The NT hope for the Christian dead is concentrated on their participation in the resurrection (1 Thes. 4:13–18), and there is therefore little evidence of belief about the 'intermediate state'. Passages which indicate, or may indicate, that the Christian dead are with Christ are Lk. 23:43; Rom. 8:38f.; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; *cf.* Heb. 12:23. The difficult passage 2 Cor. 5:2–8 may mean that Paul conceives existence between death and resurrection as a bodiless existence in Christ's presence.

VIII. The judgment

The NT insists on the prospect of divine judgment as, besides death, the single unavoidable fact of a man's future: 'It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment' (Heb. 9:27). This fact expresses the holiness of the biblical God, whose moral will must prevail, and before whom all responsible creatures must therefore in the end be judged obedient or rebellious. When God's will finally prevails at the coming of Christ, there must be a separation between the finally obedient and the finally rebellious, so that the kingdom of God will include the one and exclude the other for ever. No such final judgment occurs within history, though there are provisional judgments in history, while God in his forbearance gives all men time to repent (Acts 17:30f.; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). But at the end the truth of every man's position before God must come to light.

The Judge is God (Rom. 2:6; Heb. 12:23; Jas. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:11) or Christ (Mt. 16:27; 25:31; Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 22:12). It is God who judges through his eschatological agent Christ (Jn. 5:22, 27, 30; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). The judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10) and the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) are therefore equivalent. (The judgment committed to the saints, according to Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2f.; Rev. 20:4, means their authority to rule with Christ in his kingdom, not to officiate at the last judgment.)

The standard of judgment is God's impartial righteousness according to men's works (Mt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6, 11; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). This is true even for Christians: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). The judgment will be according to men's lights (*cf.* Jn. 9:41); according to whether they have the law of Moses (Rom. 2:12) or the natural knowledge of God's moral standards (Rom. 2:12–16), but by these standards no man can be declared righteous before God according to his works (Rom. 3:19f.). There is no hope for the man who seeks to justify himself at the judgment.

There is hope, however, for the man who seeks his justification from God (Rom. 2:7). The gospel reveals that righteousness which is not required of men but given to men through Christ. In the death and resurrection of Christ, God in his merciful love has already made his eschatological judgment in favour of sinners, acquitting them for the sake of Christ, offering them in Christ that righteousness which they could never achieve. Thus the man who has faith in Christ is free from all condemnation (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:33f.). The final criterion of judgment is therefore a man's relation to Christ (*cf.* Mt. 10:32f.). This is the meaning of the 'book of life' (Rev. 20:12, 15; *i.e.* the *Lamb's* book of life, Rev. 13:8).

The meaning of Paul's doctrine of justification is that in Christ God has anticipated the verdict of the last judgment, and pronounced an acquittal of sinners who trust in Christ. Very similar is John's doctrine that judgment takes place already in men's belief or disbelief in Christ (Jn. 3:17–21; 5:24).

The last judgment remains an eschatological fact, even for believers (Rom. 14:10), though they may face it without fear (1 Jn. 4:17). We hope for acquittal in the final judgment (Gal. 5:5), 'the crown of righteousness' (2 Tim. 4:8), on the ground of the same mercy of God through which we have already been acquitted (2 Tim. 1:16). But, even for the Christian, works are not irrelevant (Mt. 7:1f., 21, 24–27; 25:31–46; Jn. 3:21; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jas. 2:13), since justification does not abrogate the need for obedience, but precisely makes it possible for the first time. Justification is the foundation, but what men build on it is exposed to judgment (1 Cor. 3:10–15): 'If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire' (3:15).

IX. *HELL

The final destiny of the wicked is 'hell', which translates Gk. *Γέεννα*, derived from the Heb. *ג-היננום*, 'the valley of Hinnom'. This originally denoted a valley outside Jerusalem, where child sacrifices were offered to Molech (2 Ch. 28:3; 33:6). It became a symbol of judgment in Je. 7:31–33; 19:6f., and in the intertestamental literature the term for the eschatological hell of fire.

In the NT, hell is pictured as a place of unquenchable or eternal fire (Mk. 9:43, 48; Mt. 18:8; 25:30) and the undying worm (Mk. 9:48), a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 25:30), the outer darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13) and the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14f.; 21:8; *cf.* 14:10). Revelation identifies it as

Heb. Hebrew

‘the second death’ (2:11; 20:14; 21:8). It is the place of the destruction of both body and soul (Mt. 10:28).

The NT pictures of hell are markedly restrained by comparison with Jewish apocalyptic and with later Christian writings. The imagery used derives especially from Is. 66:24 (*cf.* Mk. 9:48) and Gn. 19:24, 28; Is. 34:9f. (*cf.* Rev. 14:10f.; also Jude 7; Rev. 19:3). It is clearly not intended literally but indicates the terror and finality of condemnation to hell, which is less metaphorically described as exclusion from the presence of Christ (Mt. 7:23; 25:41; 2 Thes. 1:9). The imagery of Rev. 14:10f.; 20:10 (*cf.* 19:3) should probably not be pressed to prove eternal torment, but the NT clearly teaches eternal destruction (2 Thes. 1:9) or punishment (Mt. 25:46), from which there can be no release.

Hell is the destiny of all the powers of evil: Satan (Rev. 20:10), the demons (Mt. 8:29; 25:41), the beast and the false prophet (Rev. 19:20), death and Hades (Rev. 20:14). It is the destiny of men only because they have identified themselves with evil. It is important to notice that there is no symmetry about the two destinies of men: the kingdom of God has been prepared for the redeemed (Mt. 25:34), but hell has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41) and becomes the fate of men only because they have refused their true destiny which God offers them in Christ. The NT doctrine of hell, like all NT eschatology, is never mere information; it is a warning given in the context of the gospel’s call to repentance and faith in Christ.

The NT teaching about hell cannot be reconciled with an absolute universalism, the doctrine of the final salvation of all men. The element of truth in this doctrine is that God desires the salvation of all men (1 Tim. 2:4) and gave his Son for the salvation of the world (Jn. 3:16). Accordingly, the cosmic goal of God’s eschatological action in Christ can be described in universalistic terms (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20; Rev. 5:13). The error of dogmatic universalism is the same as that of a symmetrical doctrine of double predestination: that they abstract eschatological doctrine from its proper NT context in the proclamation of the gospel. They rob the gospel of its eschatological urgency and challenge. The gospel sets before men their true destiny in Christ and warns them in all seriousness of the consequence of missing this destiny.

X. The millennium

The interpretation of the passage Rev. 20:1–10, which describes a period of a thousand years (known as the ‘millennium’) in which Satan is bound and the saints reign with Christ before the last judgment, has long been a subject of disagreement between Christians. ‘Amillennialism’ is the view which regards the millennium as a symbol of the age of the church and identifies the binding of Satan with Christ’s work in the past (Mt. 12:29). ‘Postmillennialism’ regards it as a future period of success for the gospel in history before the coming of Christ. ‘Premillennialism’ regards it as a period between the coming of Christ and the last judgment. (The term ‘chiliasm’ is also used for this view, especially in forms which emphasize the materialistic aspect of the millennium.) ‘Premillennialism’ may be further subdivided. There is what is sometimes called ‘historic premillennialism’, which regards the millennium as a further stage in the achievement of Christ’s kingdom, an interim stage between the church age and the age to come. (Sometimes 1 Cor. 15:23–28 is interpreted as supporting this idea of three stages in the fulfilment of Christ’s redemptive work.) ‘Dispensationalism’, on the other hand, teaches that the millennium is not a stage in God’s single universal redemptive action in Christ, but specifically a period in which the OT promises to the nation of Israel will be fulfilled in strictly literal form.

It should be emphasized that no other passage of Scripture clearly refers to the millennium. To apply OT prophecies of the age of salvation specifically to the millennium runs counter to the general NT interpretation of such prophecies, which find their fulfilment in the salvation already achieved by Christ and to be consummated in the age to come. This is also how Rev. itself interprets such prophecies in chs. 21f. Within the structure of Rev., the millennium has a limited role, as a demonstration of the final victory of Christ and his saints over the powers of evil. The principal object of Christian hope is not the millennium but the new creation of Rev. 21f.

Some Jewish apocalyptic writings look forward to a preliminary kingdom of the Messiah on this earth prior to the age to come, and John has very probably adapted that expectation. There are strong exegetical reasons for regarding the millennium as the consequence of the coming of Christ depicted in Rev. 19:11–21. (See G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, NCB, 1974, pp. 284–298.) This favours ‘historic premillennialism’, but it is also possible that the image of the millennium is taken too literally when it is understood as a precise period of time. Whether it is a period of time or a comprehensive symbol of the significance of the coming of Christ, the theological meaning of the millennium is the same: it expresses the hope of Christ’s final triumph over evil and the vindication with him of his people who have suffered under the tyranny of evil in the present age.

XI. The new creation

The final goal of God’s purposes for the world includes, negatively, the destruction of all God’s enemies: Satan, sin and death, and the elimination of all forms of suffering (Rev. 20:10, 14–15; 7:16f.; 21:4; Is. 25:8; 27:1; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:26, 54). Positively, God’s rule will finally prevail entirely (Zc. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 11:15), so that in Christ all things will be united (Eph. 1:10) and God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28, AV).

With the final achievement of human salvation there will come also the liberation of the whole material creation from its share in the curse of sin (Rom. 8:19–23). The Christian hope is not for redemption from the world, but for the redemption of the world. Out of judgment (Heb. 12:26; 2 Pet. 3:10) will emerge a recreated universe (Rev. 21:1; cf. Is. 65:17; 66:22; Mt. 19:28), ‘a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (2 Pet. 3:13).

The destiny of the redeemed is to be like Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2), to be with Christ (Jn. 14:3; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Col. 3:4; 1 Thes. 4:17), to share his glory (Rom. 8:18, 30; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:17; Col. 3:4; Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:1) and his kingdom (1 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26f.; 3:21; 4:10; 20:4, 6); to be sons of God in perfect fellowship with God (Rev. 21:3, 7), to worship God (Rev. 7:15; 22:3), to see God (Mt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4), to know him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Faith, hope and especially love are the permanent characteristics of Christian existence which abide even in the perfection of the age to come (1 Cor. 13:13), while ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ are similarly abiding qualities of man’s enjoyment of God (Rom. 14:17).

chs. chapters
 NCB *New Century Bible*
 av *Authorized Version* (King James’), 1611

The corporate life of the redeemed with God is described in a number of pictures: the eschatological banquet (Mt. 8:11; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 14:15–24; 22:30) or wedding feast (Mt. 25:10; Rev. 19:9), paradise restored (Lk. 23:43; Rev. 2:7; 22:1f.), the new Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21). All these are only pictures, since ‘no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’ (1 Cor. 2:9).

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