

The Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians

A New Testament exegetical study of 1 Thessalonians
with reference
to Paul and his use of the Day of the Lord motif.

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Submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of
Theology

Moore Theological College Newtown, N.S.W.

July 2017

Declaration

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Date 16 October 2017

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Abstract

The Day of the Lord has received little attention in New Testament scholarship, making a study of how it is used in 1 Thessalonians worthy of consideration. Paul employs the Day of the Lord explicitly in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 in the context of exhortation. This study-explores how Paul uses and appropriates the Day of the Lord, studies the background for Paul's use of the motif and determines whether the Parousia and the Day of the Lord are interchangeable. This is a New Testament exegetical study.

Part 1 is a literature review, which surveys: the Day of the Lord motif in scholarship with special reference to those studies that include 1 Thessalonians; and a review of methodological approaches to 1 Thessalonians. The adopted approach focuses on the Greek text of the epistle to show that the conclusions are drawn from 1 Thessalonians. It is established for purposes of later exegesis that the Thessalonian church is undergoing conflict.

Part 2 studies Paul's source for the Day of the Lord concluding that his source for understanding the motif is the Jewish Scriptures. As there is no common consensus as to the meaning and referent of the Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures, a representative sample of Day of the Lord texts are studied within the

books of Amos, Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Malachi. This found that the Day of the Lord motif is; flexible being able to refer to local and eschatological judgment, is imminent, has an ethical appeal which is to turn back to Yahweh, expresses hope and vindication for God's faithful people and is the day on which Yahweh will reveal himself to the world.

Part 3 is the exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 to ascertain how Paul uses the motif and appropriates it for the Thessalonians. The pericope 4:13-18 is included to assess whether Paul uses the motif of the Parousia interchangeably with the motif of the Day of the Lord and provides context to 5:1-11. It was found that when Paul uses the term Parousia he does so with an eschatological sense which equates similar concepts that are included in the Day of the Lord. The study of 5:1-11 found the Day of the Lord motif: affirms the certainty of the Thessalonians hope, is an ethical call to live sober and alert lives, is imminent, cannot be directly interchanged with the Parousia motif, is positive because of Jesus' death 'for us', and is evidence of Paul's high Christology.

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Acknowledgements

I thank God for his sustaining energy as I persevered in writing this thesis. I thank God for my family, Bec, Rachael and Jessica for persevering with me as I worked long hours. I thank God for my supervisor, for his patience and wisdom as he guided me through this process. I thank God for the members of Holy Trinity Anglican Church Wentworth Falls whom I bounced many ideas off, particularly Rob Maidment for reading over the draft.

May we all look forward to the Day of the Lord knowing it is the Day that we will be with Christ for all eternity.

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1 Introduction

There are few who would argue that the Day of the Lord motif is insignificant within the Scriptures. Von Rad suggests that the concept of the Day of the Lord, 'is of central significance for the entire message of the prophets.'¹ Bakon agrees when he writes, 'after the first references by Hosea and Amos, it became a powerful influence on the visions and expectations of almost every biblical prophet down to Malachi, the last of them.'² Bakon notes that the term became

¹ Geerhardt von Rad, "Origin of the concept of the Day of Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 4, no. 2 (1959): 97.

² Shimon Bakon, "The day of the Lord," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2010): 149.

such a powerful motif that 'on that Day' individuated it.'³

The Day of the Lord motif is used in the Old Testament in Isaiah (13:6, 9), Ezekiel (13:5, 30:3), Amos (5:18, 20), Joel (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14), Obadiah (1:15), Zephaniah (1:7, 14), Zechariah (14:1) and Malachi (4:5). It is also used explicitly in the New Testament by Paul (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2) and Peter (Acts 2:20; 2 Peter 3:10).

In both testaments, the motif is linked with eschatology. Hoffman makes the claim that that Day of the Lord is a phrase that is, 'inseparable from the overall problem of Biblical Eschatology.'⁴ Mayhue takes this one step further by making it a keystone in the current eschatological debate. He writes, 'it is one of the most hotly contested elements in the field of eschatology.'⁵ What Mayhue means by 'hotly contested' though is unclear, for there is little scholarly work which studies the Day of the Lord.⁶ There are a few notable exceptions, such as Mayhue and

³ Ibid.

⁴ Yair Hoffmann, "The Day of the Lord as a concept and a term in the prophetic literature," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93, no. 1 (1981): 37.

⁵ Richard Mayhue, "The Bible's watchword: day of the Lord," *Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 1 (2011): 65.

⁶ Cf. Jeffrey Weima and Stanley Porter, *An Annotated Bibliography of 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (ed. Metzger; Boston: Brill, 1998). Weima & Porter do not list an article or thesis addressing the topic of the Day of the Lord.

Blaising, but the evidence suggests that it is an understudied motif that could do with more attention.⁷ This is particularly the case when studying the motif in the New Testament, for much of the scholarly work (as will be demonstrated in the following literature review), focuses on the Day of the Lord in the latter prophets and does not attempt to study how the motif is appropriated and used in the New Testament. Given the prominence of the motif in the Old Testament and its use in the New Testament this is surprising.

Given how little attention the motif has received in recent literature the study of the motif in the New Testament is worthy of consideration. Both Peter and Paul, two prominent apostles, use the motif in their teaching and exhortation to Christians (Peter: Acts 2:20; 2 Peter 3:10; Paul: 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). While studying both would be advantageous the scope of the study would be too big. This study will focus on

⁷ Mayhue, "The Bible's watchword: day of the Lord," 65-88; Craig Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the seventieth week of Daniel," *Bibliotheca sacra* 169, no. 674 (2012): 132-42; Craig Blaising, "The day of the Lord will come: an exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18," *Bibliotheca sacra* 169, no. 676 (2012): 387-401; Craig Blaising, "The day of the Lord: theme and pattern in biblical theology," *Bibliotheca sacra* 673(2012): 3-19; Craig Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture," *Bibliotheca sacra* 169, no. 675 (2012): 259-70.

Paul's use of the motif. In texts that are attested as authentically Pauline, Paul explicitly uses the motif in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4 and 1 Corinthians 5:5. In 1 Corinthians 5 the topic of the pericope is church discipline, where Paul's concern is that the person being disciplined will be saved on the Day of the Lord. First Corinthians 5 is not a sustained treatment of the motif, rather it informs church practice. A sustained treatment is found in 1 Thessalonians 5 where Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to live in light of the eschatological reality of the Day of the Lord. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 either mentions explicitly or alludes to the Day of the Lord in the following verses:

5:2 αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι **ἡμέρα κυρίου** ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται

(for you yourselves know accurately, that the **Day of the Lord** is coming as thief in the night)

5:4 ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα **ἡ ἡμέρα** ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτης καταλάβῃ

(and you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness that **the day** would overtake as a thief)

5:5 πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ **υἱοὶ ἡμέρας**. Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους· (For you are all children of the light, and **children of the day**. We are not of the night nor of darkness)

5:8 **ἡμεῖς** δὲ **ἡμέρας ὄντες** νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·
(but **we belong to the day**, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation)

First Thessalonians is the earliest of Paul's epistles and contains a sustained treatment of the Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).⁸ For this reason, an in-depth study of the motif within this epistle will enable the reader to understand how this important Old Testament motif is appropriated by the apostle Paul for a Christian audience, asking the question why does the Day of the Lord which first appears in the Jewish Scriptures, mostly with respect to God's judgment, have any bearing on the Thessalonian Christian who has escaped this judgement (1 Thessalonians 1:10)?

⁸ Abraham Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 75.

The scope of this study will explore Paul's use of the motif within the epistle of 1 Thessalonians. To understand how Paul employs the motif, it is necessary to understand where he derives its meaning from. This means understanding the first century Pharisees' understanding of the motif. Is it influenced by the culture of the time or can the understanding from Jewish Scriptures be imported into 1 Thessalonians? It will be necessary to study this source in detail to ascertain the influences on Paul as he appropriates the motif for a Christian context. This means a broader study of the Day of the Lord is necessary before looking more specifically at 1 Thessalonians.

One could restrict a study of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians to these few references above but this does not suffice when seeking to understand Paul's use of the motif for it can be alluded to without explicitly using the term. Blaising, for instance, writes, 'the coming of the Lord and the coming of the Day of the Lord are related in a number of texts.'⁹ In another earlier article he writes, 'in Biblical

⁹ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture," 260.

parlance that the coming of the Lord and the day of His coming are often interchangeable.’¹⁰ Furthermore, it has been shown in the area of language that,

observation of the workings of the human language demonstrates that we may speak of concepts and ideas through variegated expressions. Rarely, if ever, is the communication of a concept limited to one phrase or peculiar locution. Sophisticated language users may summon synonymous, parallel, symmetrical, analogous, metaphorical, and other wise related means by which to speak of their chosen themes.¹¹

Considering this, the study of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians cannot be restricted to the verses where the motif is mentioned, but passages that allude to the Day of the Lord should also be included. While the claim abounds that Day of the Lord and the Parousia are the same, there is little in the way of scholarly study showing this to be the case. Blaising, for instance, in his study of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians, does not consider the implications of the Parousia on

¹⁰ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the seventieth week of Daniel," 140-41.

¹¹ Constantine Campbell, *Paul and union with Christ : an exegetical and theological study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 24.

Paul's use of the motif.¹² Luckensmeyer also treats the two motifs separately. He notes that there are similarities between the two motifs in his introduction but does not look at these similarities in his exegesis.¹³ On the other side, Geischen, who studies the Parousia in 1 Thessalonians, fails to make any significant mention of the Day of the Lord when exegeting 5:1-11, only allowing a short paragraph for this important chapter.¹⁴ The assumption that the Day of the Lord and the Parousia are the same therefore needs to be examined.

The following study seeks to provide a New Testament exegetical study of 1 Thessalonians with reference to Paul and his use of the Day of the Lord motif, making the following contributions to current scholarship:

- 1) A study of how Paul uses and appropriates the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians,
- 2) Establish the source of Paul's use of this motif and what he understands by it, and

¹² Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture."

¹³ David Luckensmeyer, *The Eschatology of First Thessalonians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 32.

¹⁴ Charles Gieschen, "Christ's coming and the church's mission in 1 Thessalonians," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 76, no. 1-2 (2012): 51.

- 3) Ascertain whether Paul uses Parousia and Day of the Lord to mean and refer to the same thing

To achieve this contribution, the argument will proceed as follows:

Part 1: Literary Review and Preliminary Issues

- 1) A revised and updated survey of the literature concerning the Day of the Lord with special reference to studies of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians.
- 2) This section will also address some preliminary issues such as authorship, whether there is conflict in Thessalonica when Paul wrote the letter, and the chosen approach to exegesis. This will include a brief survey on methodological approaches relevant to the interpretation conducted in this study.

Part 2: Paul's Understanding of the Day of the Lord

- 3) A detailed study of Paul's cultural and academic influences to understand Paul's source for the Day of the Lord and how he understands its implications in the current context.
- 4) Having concluded that Paul's background for the Day of the Lord comes from the Jewish Scriptures, a survey of 'Day of the Lord' in Jewish Scriptures is taken to understand the nature and purpose of the motif within those Scriptures. Methodologically this means we will first study the Day of the Lord in context of the Jewish Scriptures before focussing on its use in 1 Thessalonians. This also serves the purpose of identifying metaphors and concepts that are associated with the Day of the Lord and hence enable a better understanding of the motif in 1 Thessalonians.

Part 3: Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians with a focus on Paul's use of the Day of the Lord motif

- 5) A detailed examination of both 4:13-18 with its focus on the Parousia and 5:1-11 with its focus on the Day of the Lord, seeking to show how Paul's view of the Day of the Lord is in line with the Jewish Scriptures and how

it has been appropriated for the Thessalonian context. This part of the study will also determine whether the Parousia and the Day of the Lord are interchangeable and refer to the same event or need to be differentiated in further studies.

Part 1

Literature Review
and
Preliminary Issues

2 Literature Review

To understand how Paul uses the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians it is necessary to ground this study within the setting of broader research with respect to the Day of the Lord, and specifically the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians.

The following review can be broken into three main categories. The first is those seeking the origin of the motif. Major scholarship on the Day of the Lord began in the mid twentieth century by focussing on the origin of the motif in the Jewish Scriptures. These studies sought to reconstruct historically its origin and use within the Jewish Scriptures. The second category represents more recent studies into the Day of the Lord which tend to focus not the origin of the term but its function within the text of the Jewish Scriptures, with a minority focussing on its

use in the New Testament. The third category includes the studies which explicitly investigate the use of the motif in 1 Thessalonians 5. While numerous commentaries make a comment on the Day of the Lord, only those which add to the body of literature were included in the review.

2.1 Historical Scholarship: Origin of the motif

2.1.1 Mowinckel (1956): Day of the Lord as Enthronement

Mowinckel is the first to try to work out the historical roots of the Day of the Lord motif, concluding it refers symbolically to the enthronement festival of Yahweh.¹ This position holds that the Day of the Lord represents the day that Yahweh is enthroned as king over his people and the world. The enthronement festival looked to a promise of restoration during disaster and a message about the future. The enthronement, he posits, is summed up by the day of Yahweh motif. Mowinckel writes,

‘Its original meaning is really the day of His manifestation or epiphany, the day of His festival, and particularly that festal day which was also the

¹ Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that cometh* (trans. Anderson: Nashville : Abingdon Press, 1956).

day of His enthronement, His royal day, the festival of Yahweh, the day when as king He came and wrought salvation for his people.’²

This day also entails God’s righteous judgment of those who are hostile to his enthronement. This day was the hope of Israel for it was the day when Israel would be restored and everything made right.

2.1.2 von Rad (1959): Day of the Lord as Holy War

Von Rad proposes a second view, that the Day of the Lord finds its origins in holy war. His approach was to exegete significant texts where the concept of the day of Yahweh appears: Isaiah 13, Ezekiel 7 and Joel 2. He concludes that the day of Yahweh refers to the day of battle and the day of Yahweh’s victory.³ He writes, ‘the Day of Yahweh encompasses a pure event of war, the rise of Yahweh against enemies, his battle and his victory’⁴. He also notes based on his exegesis that ‘there is no support whatsoever’ that the enthronement of Yahweh is linked with the concept of the day of Yahweh.⁵ Having used exegesis to substantiate the holy war motif being related to the Day of the Lord, von Rad finds the origin for this

² Ibid., 145.

³ von Rad, "Day of Yahweh," 99.

⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁵ Ibid.

material in the holy wars of Yahweh, where Yahweh himself appeared to defeat his enemies.⁶

A weakness in this view is that von Rad finds the origin of the motif in the previous holy wars of Israel. These wars are never described as the Day of the Lord, and while there is some similar imagery, it is not always consistent. Weiss, for instance, notes regarding von Rad's thesis, 'in his quest for the origin of the concept of the DL [Day of the Lord] found his way to the HW [holy war] tradition, not to the origin of the concept of the DL itself.'⁷ Further, Weiss notes that the thesis itself does not stand up to criticism when other Day of the Lord passages are considered for exegesis.⁸

2.1.3 Lindblom (1962): Day of the Lord as Festal Enthronement

A further contribution to this view was made by Lindblom who focuses on the day of Yahweh, as expressed in Amos as a reference to the cultic festival designated with the title, the new year festival. Within this view the day of Yahweh was

⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁷ Meir Weiss, "The origin of the "Day of the Lord"--reconsidered," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37(1966): 39.

⁸ Ibid.

viewed as one day.⁹ He describes the new year festival as ‘usually a feast of joy and exultation’, but at this festival, ‘judgement would come upon the people.’¹⁰ Lindblom focuses less on the enthronement of Yahweh, emphasising instead the expectations of the festival. However, his view of the Day of the Lord is similar to Mowinckel’s as it revolves around the understanding of the festival for the origin of the Day of the Lord and entails both judgment and salvation.

2.1.4 Weiss (1966): Day of the Lord as Theophany

The third view put forward by Weiss identifies that a common theme between the two positions of ‘holy war’ and ‘enthronement’ is theophany. Weiss writes to critique von Rad and seeks to show that the imagery associated with the Day of the Lord motif has more in common with theophany in the Bible than with holy war.¹¹ He notes ‘the DL [Day of the Lord] is a day on which the Lord reveals himself in some way, on which he acts in some way and which is characterized by him in some manner.’¹² Klein agrees; he writes ‘theophany of Yahweh on His day is central to its interpretation as holy war or cultic festival.’¹³ Klein goes on

⁹ Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 317-18.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 31.

¹² Ibid., 40.

¹³ Ralph Klein, "Day of the Lord," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39, no. 8 (1968): 518.

to briefly show how the language of theophany is used in Day of the Lord passages throughout the Old Testament. For example, he highlights the use of cloud language in Joel 2:3 as serving as an emblem for Yahweh.¹⁴ This view is most common today, however, it will be tested in the following chapter as Day of the Lord texts are surveyed.

A unique feature of Weiss' argument, which departs from the scholarship of his time, was his suggestion that the Day of the Lord was a motif that was coined by Amos and did not have a history before then. Weiss then questions whether Amos would have understood the motif, concluding that he would have understood the eschatological use of the word יום (day) as the day in which God acts.¹⁵ This response has not stopped most scholars from thinking that the motif had a history, rejecting that it was coined by Amos.¹⁶

2.2 *Beyond the origin: literary and canonical studies of the motif*

2.2.1 **Everson (1974): Day of the Lord in text of Jewish Scriptures**

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 47.

¹⁶ Hoffmann, "The day of the Lord," 40.

Everson intentionally departs from the methodology of Weiss, von Rad and Mowinckel and seeks not to ascertain the origin of the Day of the Lord but rather wants to see how as a concept it is used by the prophets.¹⁷ Everson seeks to avoid going beyond the exegesis of the text for understanding the Day of the Lord. The texts that Everson selects for exegesis also depart from the traditional studies, for he looks only at the occurrences that point back to a historical judgment. He uses Lamentations 1- 2 and Ezekiel 13:1-9 as examples of looking back on the destruction of Judah and fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah 46:2-12 and the battle of an Egyptian army at Carchemish and Isaiah 22:1-14, which also looks at destruction of Judah but where Jerusalem narrowly escapes.¹⁸

Everson concludes that because these passages look back to the Day of the Lord, his exegesis provides a 'secure point of departure' for understanding the motif. In fact, he finds in these texts a point of departure for understanding all Day of the Lord texts.¹⁹ This conclusion, however, makes a similar methodological jump which he originally seeks to avoid, in that it imports meaning of the concept of the Day of the Lord into all the texts which he does not exegete. The strength of this

¹⁷ Joseph Everson, "Days of Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no. 3 (1974).

¹⁸ Ibid., 331.

¹⁹ Ibid., 335.

approach is that the meaning is obtained from the text, and not an external subjective historical reconstruction. Its weakness is that it assumes that these five passages are representative of all Day of the Lord passages.

Everson's conclusions regarding the Day of the Lord are that as a concept it is powerful and used by the prophets to interpret events of judgment, 'past, future and imminent' while it also holds out 'restoration, freedom, and new life of the exiles.'²⁰ Everson also concludes that Day of the Lord is associated with war.

2.2.2 Hoffman (1981): Eschatological Day of the Lord

Hoffman begins by claiming that Day of the Lord is a phrase that is 'inseparable from the overall problem of Biblical Eschatology.'²¹ Hoffman starts by critiquing Everson's methodology, as only one of Everson's passages has the full phrase 'Day of the Lord'. The others refer to a related construct: for example 'the day of His anger.' Based on this, Hoffman claims that a conclusion on the meaning of the phrase cannot be reached.²² Instead, Hoffman proceeds on the basis that 'only after a careful philological examination of the proper phrase can one proceed to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Hoffmann, "The day of the Lord," 37.

²² Ibid.

evaluate the significance of the related phrases, for comprehensive understanding of the concept.²³

To do this, Hoffman starts at Amos 5:18, the first historical occurrence of the term. Hoffman postulates that while Amos uses the term it was not yet a concrete term but rather encapsulated a concept derived from theophany and judgment being linked together in the Psalms and in the account of Elijah. At this stage the phrase was not eschatological, agreeing with Mowinckel and Everson.²⁴ Only in Zephaniah, 150 years later, did the term take on an eschatological meaning and become a term used by the prophets to refer to an eschatological event, rather than a past event.²⁵

Hoffman also concludes that variations of the phrase ‘Day of the Lord’, such as ‘day of His vengeance’, are variations on the original term ‘Day of the Lord’,

²³ Ibid., 38.

²⁴ Ibid., 40-41.

²⁵ Ibid., 46-47. Hoffman notes a few exceptions to the motif referring to an eschatological event, eg. Ezekiel 13, and assumes that the prophet knew the import of the term and used it as a literary device to draw attention to his teaching.

proposing that they were used to draw attention to specific elements of the eschatological event of the Day of the Lord.²⁶

Hoffman does not attempt to show how the concept of the Day of the Lord is ‘inseparable from the problem of Biblical Eschatology’, but he hints that a strong relationship could be important for understanding this concept in the New Testament and therefore Paul’s understanding of the concept. Methodologically, Hoffman’s work prioritises the phrases ‘Day of the Lord’ over the related construct ‘day of’ statements as important for understanding the concept of the Day of the Lord.

2.2.3 Vander Hart (1993): Day of the Lord, Messiah and the New Testament

Vander Hart asks whether the Old Testament expectation of the Messiah connects with the expectation of the day of Yahweh. This question is asked because a similar idiom to the Old Testament Day of the Lord is used in the New Testament. A further question is then posed: if there is no connection between the Messiah and the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament, ‘what is it then that allows the New

²⁶ Ibid., 48.

Testament writers to make such a direct association of the Messiah Jesus with the Day of the Lord?²⁷

Vander Hart's methodology is to focus on the text and investigate 'how the canonical Scriptures as special revelation depict the development of the Day of the LORD from its Old Testament setting to the New Testament setting.'²⁸

In his survey, Vander Hart calls the phrase the 'Day of the Lord' a '*terminus technicus*' within the Old Testament, that refers to Yahweh. He notes the dual character of the Day of the Lord: firstly there is an emphasis on judgment and secondly it is a time when 'the covenant people are blessed and raised high before the other nations.'²⁹ Within this dual character Yahweh is the sole actor. Yahweh is the one who comes down to conquer and judge. Of importance is the conclusion, 'There is no human figure, no king, no prophet, nor no priest that takes over the prerogatives of YHWH'S work.'³⁰

²⁷ Mark Vander Hart, "The transition of the Old Testament day of the Lord into the New Testament day of the Lord Jesus Christ," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (1993): 4.

²⁸ Ibid., 5.

²⁹ Ibid., 8.

³⁰ Ibid., 9.

Vander Hart then traces the messianic expectations throughout the Old Testament, looking at the Son of David and the Son of Man motifs. Per Vander Hart, there is no relationship in the Old Testament between the Son of David and the Day of the Lord. In fact he says, 'But one searches in vain for any hint in the Old Testament history of revelation that the son of David would be the one responsible for the Day of YHWH.' This is also true of the Son of Man motif. The Son of Man motif in Daniel 7 is the clearest indication that someone is going to act on behalf of Yahweh but this vision is not linked 'with any explicit reference to the day of Yahweh.'³¹ He concludes that there are two streams of thought in the Old Testament that are not antithetical but are distinct: Yahweh will act in judgment and salvation, and a human figure in the line of David will be raised up to lead God's people.

In the New Testament, the Day of the Lord is not a *terminus technicus* as in the Old. Vander Hart shows that Jesus understood himself to be both the Messiah and the Son of Man (Luke 9:27, 12:35, 22:67-70; Mark 8:38, 14:61-62; Matthew 16:27, 26:63ff). Jesus also spoke of the coming judgment (Mark 13; Matthew 24-25; Luke 13:34-35; 17:22-37; 19:41-44; 21:20-28) and how this judgement will come with the Son of Man (Luke 21:27), thus showing that all the 'prerogatives

³¹ Ibid., 11.

of the Day of the Lord devolve upon' Jesus.³²

Hence the two strands of thought, the Son of Man's return and the Day of the Lord, are linked by Jesus and associated with his coming. Vander Hart notes that while Jesus brought in the Day of the Lord, it is a motif that looks forward. He sees this especially in Paul's writing:

'Whereas the Gospels are reticent in their use of the Day of the LORD idiom, Paul uses it throughout the vast majority of his correspondence to the churches, beginning in the earliest epistles (the Thessalonian letters) and continuing to his last epistle (2 Timothy). There is no explicit discussion in the Pauline epistles of Jesus' life and death as being a fulfillment of the Day of the LORD. But this is understandable because it was to the Messiah's return and His presence at that time that the church turned its attention, even as Christ now lives in the church through His Spirit (1 Corinthians. 12:4ff.; 2 Corinthians. 1:24; etc.). The Day of YHWH was the visit of God to His people, and thus Jesus first coming had begun an era in which His imminent return was inextricably a necessary part.'³³

³² Ibid., 22.

³³ Ibid., 17.

2.2.4 Rendtorff (1998): Literary Canonical Approach to the Day of the Lord

Rendtorff takes a literary approach to the Book of the Twelve and seeks to show how the Day of the Lord theme is developed from the reader's perspective of reading the twelve books as a unity. This means that the logical place to start is not Amos but rather Joel which precedes Amos in the Book of the Twelve.³⁴ From looking at the Day of the Lord in Joel, Rendtorff concludes that the exact definition of the Day of the Lord is 'a mighty, even terrible event, including destructive elements, coming from the divine sphere.'³⁵ An event where one asks, who will survive? The answer, those who turn back to the Lord with all their heart. So the Day of the Lord is about a transaction between God and his people. Rendtorff understands Joel to be a 'truly eschatological vision' of the Day of the Lord, and so, contrary to Hoffman, the motif in Amos must also be read as eschatological.³⁶

³⁴ Rolf Rendtorff, "Alas for the day : the "day of the Lord" in the Book of the Twelve," in *God in the fray: a tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (ed. Beal; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 186-87.

³⁵ Ibid., 188.

³⁶ Ibid., 190.

Rendtorff then demonstrates how the motif is used throughout the Book of the Twelve. He notes there are slight developments of the motif through the Book of the Twelve, but that the Day of the Lord still represents God's judgment and a chance for God's people to turn back to him. This is particularly picked up in his reading of Zephaniah. It needs to be explored if this is how Paul would have read the Bible.

2.2.5 Nogalski (2003): Phrase and constructs of Day of the Lord

Nogalski follows Rendtorff in analysing the Day of the Lord motif in the Book of the Twelve. Nogalski begins his discussion by asking a similar question to Everson regarding what phrases should be included when studying the Day of the Lord. He concludes 'any study of the day of YHWH must include more than the phrase יום יהוה', and that the 'day of YHWH appears in variant forms' and that the 'formula's, "on that day" and "in those days" manifest conceptual similarities.'³⁷ Further phrases including the construct, 'the day of', are assessed individually in context with the Day of the Lord sayings. This methodology does not give primacy

³⁷ James Nogalski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the book of the twelve," in *Thematic threads in the Book of the Twelve* (eds. Redditt and Scharf; vol. 325 of *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 193.

to the exact phrase 'Day of the Lord' but rather studies how the concept is used through the Book of the Twelve.

The Day of the Lord for Nogalski is a day of divine intervention.³⁸ This supports Rendtorff's view and highlights the significance of the motif 'Day of the Lord' for understanding the latter prophets. Additionally, and importantly for this study, it gives justification for including texts that use the concept of the Day of the Lord rather than being restricted to the exact phrase.³⁹

2.2.6 Barton (2004): Historical Meaning of the Day of the Lord

Barton analyses and critiques both the historical critical approach of Mowinckel and von Rad and the canonical approach of Rendtorff.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 212.

³⁹ cf. Paul House, who completed a similar study to Nogalski and Rendtorff but his conclusions did not differ and so was not included in this survey; House, "Endings as new beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the day of the Lord, and renewal in the book of the 12," *ibid.*

⁴⁰ John Barton, "The Day of Yahweh in the minor prophets," in *Biblical and Near Eastern essays : studies in honour of Kevin J. Cathcart* (eds. McCarthy and Healey; *Journal for the study of the Old Testament: Supplement series 375*; London: T & T International, 2004).

Barton starts with a historical approach and seeks to look for common ground between the two positions of the motif referring to a cultic festival or holy war. Barton notes three areas of commonality between the two positions. First, there is the hope of divine intervention on behalf of Israel in world affairs. Second, there is the hope of immanency with respect to the divine intervention and third, it required a belief that God controlled not just Israel but other nations.⁴¹ Barton then reconstructs the historical understanding of this day in Amos and exegetes the book of Joel, which he dates much later than Amos, and concludes based on Amos and Joel that on the Day of the Lord: 1) Yahweh will bring radical change in world order, 2) Yahweh will bring hope of imminent divine intervention, and 3) ‘by so doing Yahweh makes clear his dominion over the whole world.’⁴² It is noteworthy that he does not adopt Weiss’s position that the Day of the Lord refers to theophany. Further to this, Barton compares Amos to Joel and concludes that while Amos subverts the motif making it against Israel rather than the nations, Joel and Amos agree as to what the Day of the Lord entails. He writes, ‘The idea of the Day of Yahweh did not *develop* over the course of Israelite prophecy. It was

⁴¹ Ibid., 70.

⁴² Ibid., 72.

part of a fixed system of popular thought found in all periods, and only challenged by the few, such as Amos and Isaiah.’⁴³

The second part of Barton’s article assesses the canonical approach put forward by Rendtorff for understanding the Day of the Lord. Barton does not subscribe to this approach except to say that historically it is valid, because the canon came into being at a time in history and so gives us insight into the redactors views.⁴⁴ He acknowledges the advantages of the canonical approach in that it is how an ‘innocent’ reader might understand the books, for it treats the books as a finished product and allows themes and messages to be more easily accommodated into theology.⁴⁵ The highlighted weakness of this approach is that it forces upon the reader a scheme of thought, or an interpretive grid, in which a motif, such as the Day of the Lord is read. Barton demonstrates this with the example of the Day of the Lord in Amos, which he has already shown to have the same message as Joel. He highlights Amos’ subversion of the motif, where the Day of the Lord falls upon Israel, loses its strength as a challenge for ‘it does not challenge the reader with

⁴³ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

the possibility that *beneath* the surface there may lurk a far more radical and disturbing message.⁴⁶

Barton is one of minority of recent scholars who prefers the historical approach in studying the Day of the Lord. He provides his own conclusion regarding the original meaning of the motif, that differs from previous historical studies. Barton therefore lays the foundation for a historical perspective, that does not have to depend on historical origin of the motif but rather the historical meaning, that is the Day of the Lord is an imminent day when Yahweh will act to change the world and demonstrate his power over it.

2.2.7 Kline(2005): Day of the Lord fulfilled in Christ

Kline seeks to show how the Day of the Lord motif throughout the Bible is fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection. Kline begins his study of the motif with the creation account in Genesis, where God's creative endeavours climaxed on the seventh day.⁴⁷ Kline posits that this day was a day of divine visitation, and

⁴⁶ Ibid., 75. (Emphasis original)

⁴⁷ Bergman Kline, "The Day of the Lord in the death and resurrection of Christ," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 4 (2005): 757.

is hence an eschatological day that looks forward. Sin, however, alters this eschatological day causing the Lord to intervene.

The Day of the Lord is defined not as one single event, rather,

Ultimately, every Day of the Lord theophany points forward to that great day at the end of the age when Christ will come again in glory in order to dispose of his foes with a decisive and final destruction and to deliver his people, bringing them into the blessedness of God's presence forever.⁴⁸

The event of the Day of the Lord occurs whenever consummation and final judgment are not content to wait but rather break into history. When this happens, Kline suggests that three elements characterising the Day of the Lord are inaugurated: eschatology, redemptive recreation and trial by ordeal.⁴⁹

The first characteristic is inaugurated eschatology. What Kline means by this is how the Day of the Lord breaks into history. There are two motifs from the Old

⁴⁸ Ibid., 758.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 757.

Testament highlighted. The first is temple imagery.⁵⁰ This is seen in Zechariah in the rebuilding of the temple, ‘On that day, says the Lord,’ he will raise up his servant Zerubbabel (Haggai 2:23) to rebuild the temple (Zechariah 4:9), not by might or power but by the Spirit of the Lord (Zechariah 4:6).⁵¹ In the New Testament this motif is developed by Jesus, who through his death and resurrection builds a temple, where he is the cornerstone (Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11).⁵² The second motif is nature imagery.⁵³ It is marked by ‘abundant water and other natural blessings’ (Isaiah 43:19; cf. Psalms 107:35; Isaiah 35:6-7; 41:17-18; 58:11; Psalms 42:1-2; 63:1; 143:6), which point to the eschatological Day of the Lord. Jesus’ fulfilment of this is seen in his being the source of living water (John 4:10, 7:39). Kline also notes at this point that in the New Testament, the Day of the Lord or ‘that day’ is a technical term referring to the second coming of Christ.⁵⁴

The second characteristic is redemptive recreation. This is where the curse of sin is reversed. Particularly this is seen with the water and blood motif that is explored

⁵⁰ Ibid., 759.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 760.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 761.

throughout the New Testament with both cleansing water and cleansing blood (John 4:1-30; 19:4; Hebrews 9:19; 1 John 5:6-8).⁵⁵ Once again, these motifs find their fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The third characteristic is trial by ordeal. Kline demonstrates this characteristic by referring to multiple examples, one of which is the exodus where God saves Israel.⁵⁶ This is the Day of the Lord moment where God saves Israel after an ordeal and in the process judges Egypt. This is typology for Jesus who also faces many trials, is delivered over to death and is then 'saved' by his resurrection and exaltation.⁵⁷ This event is a climax of the Day of the Lord as Jesus takes upon himself divine judgment.

Kline seeks to show at each step how Christ is the fulfilment of each of the Day of the Lord motifs he identifies. Jesus fulfils it in his death and resurrection and in his second coming. If this is the case, for Paul, the implications are that as he proclaims the Day of the Lord is coming, he already would have understood it as being fulfilled. Whether this is true in 1 Thessalonians is a question for this study.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 763.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 768.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

A weakness in Kline's approach is that he did not specify his methodology and why he chose to include the texts that he did. Further, he departs from previous scholarship by interpreting the Day of the Lord motif more broadly without giving the necessary justification. A result of this approach is the motif is biased towards redemptive history and, while mentioned, fails to give the retributive aspect of the Day of the Lord the time it demands.

2.2.8 Bakon (2010): Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures

Bakon is a Jewish scholar who traces the Day of the Lord motif through the prophets of the Old Testament. Bakon writes of the Day of the Lord, 'after the first references by Hosea and Amos, it became a powerful influence on the visions and expectations of almost every biblical prophet down to Malachi, the last of the them.'⁵⁸ Bakon notes that the term became such a powerful motif that the phrase "“on that Day” individuated it.'⁵⁹

Bakon surveys six prophets and their use of the motif highlighting both its purpose and implications. He concludes the Day of the Lord is universal in scope and is

⁵⁸ Bakon, "The day of the Lord," 149.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

moving towards the end of days creating the expectation of the Day of the Lord where everyone will acknowledge Yahweh, with the faithful remnant of Israel living at peace in the land of Israel. Within Bakon's perspective, the Day of the Lord equally represents both judgment and salvation.

2.2.9 Aernie (2011): Day of the Lord and forensic language in 2 Thessalonians

Aernie sets out to show how 'forensic language, allusions, and idioms' in 2 Thessalonians encourage the Thessalonians to persevere while they wait for vindication.⁶⁰ He tests the thesis that the forensic language originated from the day of Yahweh in the Old Testament.⁶¹

Aernie starts his thesis by assessing the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians as Pauline and concludes that it is Pauline in its entirety. He makes a case for Paul's theology being based on the Old Testament Jewish influences rather than Hellenistic influences. Having made these key assumptions, he then seeks to show how the forensic language of the epistle is drawn from the Day of the Lord. The Day of

⁶⁰ Matthew Aernie, *Forensic language and the day of the Lord motif in Second Thessalonians 1 and the effects on the meaning of the text* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 175.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the Lord is defined as a ‘fixed court day in accord with God’s final judgment’ where it is a day of ‘exoneration’ for the Thessalonians but a day of ‘judgment’ for their enemies.⁶² The forensic language of the epistle is then related to this day, for example the word ἀποκάλυψις (2 Thessalonians 1:7), a word which Aernie acknowledges traditionally is not found in judicial contexts. It is included in his study because Paul equates the Parousia of Christ with the Day of the Lord and its context in 2 Thessalonians describes a judgment scene.⁶³ He concludes that that the term ἀποκάλυψις ‘is an idiomatic expression for the Day of the Lord.’⁶⁴ By examining words of judgment and linking their foundation and origin with the Day of the Lord, Aernie is able to demonstrate how the motif functions through the whole book.

The benefit of this study is it shows the pervasiveness of the motif within the epistle even when the motif is not directly referred to. It also provides a basis for undertaking a similar work in 1 Thessalonians and the possibility that even though the motif is only mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5 it undergirds the rest of the epistle. Some of the assumptions of Aernie need to be further explored, such as

⁶² Ibid., 107-08.

⁶³ Ibid., 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

what of Paul's background was influencing Paul. Aernie did not demonstrate that this was true for 1 Thessalonians, which means that the conclusions drawn from his study cannot simply be transferred to 1 Thessalonians. It does, however, provide a helpful model for approaching the motif in 1 Thessalonians.

2.2.10 Boda and McConville (2012): Survey of the Day of Lord in Jewish Scriptures

Boda and McConville survey the Day of the Lord motif in the Jewish Scriptures, evaluating previous scholars and applying a methodology where they study the text in context to determine the meaning of the motif.⁶⁵

With regard to the origin of the term, Boda and McConville conclude there is lack of scholarly consensus due to the 'difficulty of trying to trace the development of this motif through Israel's existence' with only limited evidence.⁶⁶ What they state

⁶⁵ Mark Boda and J. G. McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament prophets* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2012).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 136.

can be known is the image the motif portrays, namely the appearance of Yahweh.⁶⁷ A further issue they address is that of determining which passages refer to the motif, acknowledging it is a complex issue.⁶⁸ After critiquing von Rad who limits his study to those passages that explicitly refer to the Day of the Lord, they conclude with Nogalski that 'limiting the Day of the Lord to the specific verses that contain the phrase *yôm YHWH* is overly restrictive and diminishes the significance of this concept throughout prophetic literature.'⁶⁹ The final issue addressed before surveying the texts themselves is the nature of the timing of the Day of the Lord, where they conclude that it is a flexible term that can refer to the past, present and the future.⁷⁰

2.2.11 Bulkeley (2013): Day of the Lord and Amos

Bulkeley aims to show how the Day of the Lord is not simply an isolated text within Amos but rather the organising principle for the book.⁷¹ The Day of the Lord is defined as 'decisive theophany.'⁷² The approach of Bulkeley adopts Rendtorff's work but does not address Barton's critiques which would have

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 133.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁷¹ Tim Bulkeley, "The Book of Amos and the Day of Yahweh," *Colloquium* 45(2013).

⁷² Ibid., 156.

strengthened his work. Bulkeley shows how the theophany, and hence the Day of the Lord, can be interpreted as the organising theme of Amos.

While his study is not as broad as some of the others reviewed, it is a recent work that links the Day of the Lord motif directly with theophany. He also demonstrates that the canonical approach suggested by Rendtorff can still be used in gaining a better understanding of the motif of the Day of the Lord.

2.3 The Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians

2.3.1 Luckensmeyer (2009): Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians

Luckensmeyer writes a monograph seeking to show that the hermeneutical key for interpreting 1 Thessalonians is eschatology. Given that the topic of his work is eschatology in 1 Thessalonians, of which there are many similarities with this research paper, it is worth seeing how the motif functioned within his work.

Luckensmeyer is only interested in the Day of the Lord as it functions within the text to help explain it. He notes, ‘my interest does not lie so much with the motif itself’ but he chooses instead to focus on statements referring to anger and

salvation.⁷³ Within his exegesis of chapter 5:1-11 he notes that the motif similarly entails both anger and salvation and that there is a ‘transference of association developed, from God to his agent.’⁷⁴ The agent identified is Jesus and his coming Parousia. He further notes, that understanding the Day of the Lord motif enables the reader to understand phrases, such as children of the day.

2.3.2 Blaising (2011): Day of the Lord and the rapture

Blaising traces the history of the interpretation of the motif ‘Day of the Lord’ in four lectures.⁷⁵

In his first lecture, Blaising traces the history of the motif of the Day of the Lord. Within this history he highlights recent premillennial interpretations of the motif.⁷⁶

⁷³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 32.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁷⁵ Originally given as lectures, “The Day of the Lord,” delivered as the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectureship, March 29–April 1, 2011, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

⁷⁶ Blaising, "Theme & Pattern."

In his second lecture, Blaising shows how Daniel 9 and Jeremiah 25 are a pattern of fulfilment of the Day of the Lord.⁷⁷ Blaising identifies Daniel 9 as the central chapter within Daniel, he writes ‘this chapter addresses the concern that underlies the entire book, namely, the concern for the restoration of Jerusalem, the return of Israel, and the fulfilment of the promises of blessing.’⁷⁸ Daniel 9 predicts the destruction of the temple and coming of the Messiah.⁷⁹ The connection between Daniel 9 and Jeremiah 25 is key for understanding Daniel’s Day of the Lord motif. Not only are there links in content, such as ‘day of the divine wrath’, but ‘this worldwide judgment prophesied by Jeremiah is typified in Daniel's visions and projected into the future long after the return that Jeremiah predicted.’⁸⁰ Jeremiah speaks of the sixth century destruction as ‘the day of the LORD’. Blaising notes there are similarities between Daniel and the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24) where Jesus speaks of the Day of the Lord, both displaying similar structure and features.⁸¹ He writes, ‘one feature that particularly unifies the whole is the imagery of labor and child birth... The end will not come at once but will conclude a

⁷⁷ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the seventieth week of Daniel."

⁷⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁸¹ Ibid., 139.

process like labor. This Day of the Lord imagery is linked to Daniel's image of the appearing of the Son Man at the end of a time of trouble.⁸²

Blaising then seeks to show the relationship of the rapture to the Day of the Lord by exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:12.⁸³ Blaising relies heavily on intertextual links from the Olivet discourse and the seventy weeks in the book of Daniel 9 as he interprets 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. Rather than starting with the text, he starts with the intertextual allusions such as times and seasons in 5:1 and the Day of the Lord being like labour pains. This is not an illegitimate way of reading the text, however it does not show specifically how the day the Lord motif functions for the Thessalonians. Thus he does not explore how Paul either develops the motif or changes it within 1 Thessalonians. Blaising's concern is to show how the Day of the Lord relates to the rapture. Blaising makes much of the labour pains being the beginning of the pains and not the climax of the event. Once again, an intertextual link is used to support this from 1 Thessalonians 4:12-18 where it is referring to the rapture event. Blaising concludes that the Day of the Lord is not an instantaneous event, but rather has a beginning and an end. An issue to be explored in this thesis is whether Blaising makes too much of the

⁸² Ibid., 139-40.

⁸³ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture," 259-70.

metaphor of labour pains and whether the labour pains metaphor is speaking of the timing of the event, or rather highlighting the unexpected nature of the event.

In his final lecture, Blaising looks at the nature of judgment and its ethical implications through an exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18.⁸⁴ He first establishes a link between morality and hope, and states 'we see increasing immorality in direct proportion to the society's growing disbelief in an intervention by God in this world.'⁸⁵ Blaising's concern is to show that the Day of the Lord will bring judgment. This may have bearing on some of the ethical implications of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians.

2.3.3 Mayhue (2011): Old Testament and New Testament use of the Day of the Lord

Mayhue surveys the Day of the Lord in both Old and New Testaments with the purpose of demonstrating his premillennial understanding of the duration and order of the final judgment.⁸⁶ Rather than synthesising the Day of the Lord texts together, Mayhue treats each text individually, allowing context to interpret the Day of the Lord's function and purpose within the text. In this sense, the Day of

⁸⁴ Blaising, "The day of the Lord will come: an exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-18."

⁸⁵ Ibid., 391.

⁸⁶ Mayhue, "The Bible's watchword: day of the Lord."

the Lord is not a technical term, as it is always referring to one event.⁸⁷ He writes, 'DOL [Day of the Lord] is used to describe several events and is limited only by its mention in biblical revelation. Each appearance of DOL must be interpreted in its context to determine whether the prophet expected the immediate historical act of God or Yahweh's ultimate eschatological visitation.'⁸⁸ This definition, however, creates a false dichotomy where a text cannot refer to both meanings. However, it is in the realm of expectation (which later exegesis will demonstrate) that the meaning of the Day of the Lord could refer both to a local and an eschatological fulfilment.

A unique contribution Mayhue makes to the Day of the Lord is that he posits blessing as not being intrinsically associated with the motif, but something that occurs after the event.⁸⁹ He also distinguishes between the terms 'Day of the Lord' and 'in that day', where blessing is not part of the former but is always part of the latter. One question that will be addressed in this thesis is whether such a distinction exists, especially given previous studies have concluded that 'in that day' is synonymous with the Day of the Lord.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid., 68.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁰ cf. Bakon, "The day of the Lord," 149.

Mayhue also contributes to an understanding of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians. He concludes that the Day of the Lord should be read as it is read in the Old Testament but provides no evidence for why this should be the case.⁹¹ This assumption needs to be tested, for if Paul did not use the Old Testament understanding of the motif it changes how the motif might function within the epistle. Mayhue also makes the following observations based on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11: '1) The Thessalonians knew all they needed to know about the Day of the Lord,' 2) 'the day will come like a thief, uninvited, unannounced and unexpected,' 3) 'the day will come as a complete shock to those expecting peace and safety,' 4) 'the day is inevitable and irreversible' and 5) 'the day will not come upon those of light.'⁹² These theses will be tested by exegesis in the following chapters.

2.3.4 Johnson (2016): Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians

Andy Johnson comments on the Day of the Lord in his theological commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians. While focussing on the motif of the Day of the Lord, Johnson makes two comments that add to the body of the literature.

⁹¹ Mayhue, "The Bible's watchword: day of the Lord," 72.

⁹² Ibid., 72-73.

The first is, contra to Plevnik, that the ‘Parousia and the Day of the Lord are not simply interchangeable..., the Parousia happens *on*, and is the catalyst for, the Day of the Lord, but it is not equivalent to everything else that happens on that Day.’⁹³ This assertion affects the current study and while Johnson does not see Day of the Lord except in chapter 5, as 1 Thessalonians is studied it cannot be assumed a reference to the Parousia is necessarily referring to the Day of the Lord.

Second, he notes that Paul is redefining monotheism Christologically by using the Day of the Lord motif and applying it to Jesus and his coming. He cites that this is ‘one of the best examples’ of Paul applying Old Testament Yahweh texts to Jesus.⁹⁴ This observation builds on the work of Fee, and means that Paul in his epistles is using the motif as evidence of Jesus’ divinity.⁹⁵ This will have implications for understanding the coming of Yahweh and its links with the Parousia of Jesus the Messiah.

⁹³ Andy Johnson, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016), 135. (emphasis original)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ cf. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 188.

2.4 *Conclusion*

A survey of the literature shows that the Day of the Lord is a significant term in the latter prophets which is picked up and used to great effect in the New Testament.

Earlier studies which focused on the Day of the Lord tended to explore how it was used in its Old Testament context. Historical approaches sought to find the origin of the term of which today there is still little consensus. Recent scholarship prefers to look at how the motif was used within the texts to communicate with its readers, asking questions about what the Day refers to and its meaning in the text rather than seeking to ascertain its origin.

There is little consensus regarding a definition of the motif of the Day of the Lord. The motif itself is flexible, being able to refer to judgment in different contexts such as the local context of Israel, or Israel's enemies, but most regularly has as its referent eschatological judgment. Also linked with the Day of the Lord, if not included in the motif, the idea of salvation and vindication for those who are faithful in serving Yahweh. It is a day when Yahweh himself will act, and visit the nations and Israel, and bring judgment and salvation.

The surveys themselves of the Old Testament texts vary widely in terms of texts included and conclusions reached. This highlights that if Old Testament use of the motif is deemed relevant, a fresh survey in this area is needed.

Within New Testament surveys of the motif, there is also a reliance on how the motif functions within the Old Testament to ascertain its meaning in the New Testament. This may or may not be justified. Also, these studies are not focused on one text or book of the New Testament which means there is currently little scholarly interaction between the function of the motif in the texts of the New Testament. Also, within the scholarship it was assumed that the Parousia of the Christ and the Day of the Lord are referring to the same event, but little is made of this connection within current studies of the Day of the Lord. This provides the impetus to investigate this claim within the New Testament.

Within 1 Thessalonians the motif is occasionally studied, being interpreted alongside other Day of the Lord passages in the New Testament to gain a better understanding of the motif. This approach generally treats the texts in isolation from the immediate context of the letter in which it appears.

Finally, there is little in the body of scholarship with respect to the Day of the Lord motif in the context of 1 Thessalonians, exploring its meaning and how it is applied to believers and non-believers alike. This study will seek to show, as Aernie did for 2 Thessalonians, whether the Day of the Lord can be found throughout 1Thessalonians undergirding Paul's thought, or whether it is right to look at only 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 when studying the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians.

3 This Study's approach to 1 Thessalonians

In understanding Paul's use of the Day of the Lord motif there are some preliminary issues that need to be addressed that will inform and influence interpretive decisions in exegesis in the following study of 1 Thessalonians. This chapter will address the following four preliminary issues; the methodological approach for this study, the structure of 1 Thessalonians, authorship of the letter, and whether the Thessalonian church was experiencing conflict or not.

3.1 Methodological Approaches and 1 Thessalonians

One aspect of literary studies and interpretation that is not settled is the methodological approach to 1 Thessalonians and 'one's overall understanding of

1 Thessalonians will depend largely on which methodological approach one gives priority and how one applies it.¹ Adams has identified the following methodological approaches: epistolary, rhetorical, linguistic and theological, which will be discussed in turn.²

3.1.1 Epistolary

The epistolary approach evaluates Pauline letters as an ancient letter, comparing the structure of the epistle with those of other ancient letters with a view to better understanding the function of each part of the text. Adams highlights there is no scholarly consensus regarding the structure of 1 Thessalonians, with three, four and five part divisions proposed, all differing on the limits of those divisions.³ The best example of this within 1 Thessalonians is the debate about where the section labelled 'letter-thanksgiving' ends: 1:10 or 3:13.⁴ While acknowledging the usefulness of this approach for being able to work out the structure of an epistle,

¹ Karl Donfried, "The scope and nature of the debate: An introduction and some questions," in *The Thessalonians debate : methodological discord or methodological synthesis?* (eds. Donfried and Beutler; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 3.

² S. A. Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians : An Outline of Holistic Approaches to 1 Thessalonians in the Last 25 Years," *Currents in Biblical Research* 8, no. 1 (2009).

³ Ibid., 53-54.

⁴ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 47-48.

Adams does not advocate it as a methodology because of the way it reduces the text into fragments rather than acknowledge the complexity of the Pauline letter as it is read as a whole.⁵

Luckensmeyer, in his monograph, assesses this approach and uses it to form his own structure of the book of 1 Thessalonians.⁶ Luckensmeyer also claims to use a rhetorical approach. However, he tends to use this implicitly within his argument to ascertain his epistolary divisions and could not be called rhetorical in the technical sense of the term. It is worth noting that Luckensmeyer's focus on rhetoric means he does not take the traditional epistolary approach of comparison with ancient letters but rather focuses on the text of the passage to engage with the epistolary arguments.

Within the epistolary methodology, the explicit Day of the Lord passage in 1 Thessalonians 5 falls within what is commonly noted as the paraenetic section or ethical teaching. This indicates that the Day of the Lord is not simply theological teaching, but rather teaching that is used to influence behaviour.

⁵ Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians," 57.

⁶ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 47.

3.1.2 Rhetorical

Like the epistolary methodology, rhetorical methodology seeks to apply ancient rhetorical categories to a letter to determine its function and structure.⁷ Adams notes that this is one of the main approaches to 1 Thessalonians and that within this methodology there are three paradigms: 1) rhetoric as a tool to understand certain parts of the text but still use epistolary approach, this is not a holistic approach, 2) that the letters are speeches given with minimal editing – a holistic approach and 3) both rhetorical and epistolary methodology are valid but working on different discourse levels.⁸ The most dominant approach is a combination of using-the epistolary approach while recognising the legitimate use of rhetorical features within the text, as per the Luckensmeyer example cited above.⁹

Witherington, on the other hand adopts approach number 2, seeking to show that 1 Thessalonians is a form of rhetoric called epideictic.¹⁰ Viewing 1 Thessalonians in this way, the letter is written primarily to enhance understanding and

⁷ Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians," 57.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: a socio-rhetorical commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

knowledge, as opposed to deliberative rhetoric which is a call to action.¹¹ This thought, in itself, is not unanimous, for while Witherington claims majority support in his view, he also acknowledges that some rhetorical analysis concludes that 1 Thessalonians is deliberative.¹² This is supported by Walton who surveys deliberative approaches to 1 Thessalonians and concludes the letter is epideictic.¹³ The deliberative approach also lends itself to a similar interpretation to Malherbe who concludes, though he uses the epistolary methodology, that in 1 Thessalonians 'the paraenetic style is actually reflected in the form and function of the letter and is present throughout.'¹⁴ The different approaches within rhetoric serves to highlight the subjective nature of this interpretive approach.

Furthermore, an important question that Adams raises considering this current study is that rhetorical methodology 'begs the question of whether the ancients themselves, including Paul, would have viewed the letter in these categories.'¹⁵ If

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Ibid., 24.

¹³ Steve Walton, "What Has Aristotle to Do with Paul? Rhetorical Criticism and 1 Thessalonians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 2 (1995): 250; cf. F. W. Hughes, "The Rhetoric of 1 Thessalonians," in *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (ed. Collins; Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press, 1990), 106.

¹⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 81.

¹⁵ Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians," 60.

the answer to this question is yes, it creates a helpful approach for interpreting the Day of the Lord motif and its function within 1 Thessalonians. This, however, begs the question of which rhetorical categories Paul would have been familiar with and used. However, there is no substantial evidence that Paul did use these categories in writing 1 Thessalonians, as reflected in the wide range of methodological approaches. For this paper, rhetorical techniques will be noted as they appear in the text but will not form the basis of interpreting the letter.

3.1.3 Theological

The theological approach treats the book of 1 Thessalonians holistically and seeks to draw from it theological insights. Adams notes that this approach has not been utilised widely.¹⁶ Since Adams wrote his article, further commentaries have written a section on theological themes (or images) of 1 Thessalonians and Andy Johnson has written a commentary using a theological approach.¹⁷ Johnson gives some insight into the approach when he says there ‘is no final consensus having

¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹⁷ Nijay Gupta, *1-2 Thessalonians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016); Gary Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012); Johnson, *First and Second Thessalonians*. For a current widely respected commentary that does not explicitly draw attention to theological themes and motifs cf. Jeffrey Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

emerged as to its particular shape.’¹⁸ His particular approach sees theology as guiding the church in God’s mission, with scripture informing the theology and theology in turn informing scripture. The two lenses he uses are that of the traditional Nicene Creed and the salvation/redemptive story arc of the Bible, assuming the unity of the biblical canon.¹⁹

Given that eschatology is one of the areas within which the Day of the Lord motif fits, seeking to understand theologically how the motif functions across 1 Thessalonians and how it is informed by wider theological reflection will be beneficial for this study.

3.1.4 Linguistic

The linguistic model moves away from the historical approaches of seeking to understand either the epistolary and rhetorical conventions of the first century to focusing on the ‘text and its composition.’²⁰

¹⁸ Johnson, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

²⁰ Adams, "Evaluating 1 Thessalonians," 62.

Two recent scholars use this approach. The first is Weima who combines literary analysis with an epistolary approach to determine the structure of 1 Thessalonians.²¹ Weima chooses this approach for he ‘takes seriously the fact that Paul wrote letters and that, consequently, the most important source for understanding the apostle’s letters must naturally be the letter-writing practices of the day.’²²

A second scholar is Milinovich who combines the rhetorical approach with the linguistic. Milinovich wants to dispense with the ‘subjective’ approaches to 1 Thessalonians and rather focus on the ‘lexical-grammatical evidence and the cultural milieu of orality in late antiquity.’²³ It is unclear how his methodology itself will be free from subjectivity, given that ‘milieu’ refers to a person’s environmental/social context which historical criticism has shown is a subjective undertaking, and further he does not acknowledge his own prejudice and bias which he brings to the act of interpretation.²⁴ The lens for the lexical-grammatical

²¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 57.

²² Ibid.

²³ Timothy Milinovich, "Memory and Hope in the Midst of Chaos: Reconsidering the Structure of 1 Thessalonians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2014): 498.

²⁴ "Milieu." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 29 Dec. 2016.

analysis is the rhetorical approach which is assumed and then the linguistic model is applied to form his thesis: 1 Thessalonians is made up of three chiasms that interrelate.

The strength of this approach is that conclusions are supported by the evidence that exists within 1 Thessalonians.

3.1.5 Conclusion

What this part of the survey has shown is that there is no uniform approach to interpreting 1 Thessalonians but that it is most common to combine multiple approaches in the interpretive endeavour. Johanson notes that no one approach is adequate for the task of interpreting 1 Thessalonians.²⁵ Further, it has drawn attention to the debate concerning the overall structure of 1 Thessalonians and how little consensus there is even within the same approach.

3.2 Methodological Approach of this study

²⁵ Bruce Johanson, *To all the Brethren: A text-linguistic and rhetorical approach to 1 Thessalonians* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 187.

Ascough notes in his reconstruction of 1-2 Thessalonians that,

everything that we know from the first generation or two of Christ adherents in this cosmopolitan city stems from these two letters, along with a brief passage in the Book of Acts and a few comments scattered in other of Paul's letters. This is not very much information on which to construct a picture of the organization, practices and beliefs of the Christ group, or groups at Thessalonike.²⁶

Given this, the methodological approach adopted for study of 1 Thessalonians focuses primarily on the Greek text of 1 Thessalonians. While a mirror reading of the text can provide useful insights, we also need to heed Ascough's warning, 'such a strategy must be used with caution, since we really only have the point of view of the letter writers, and they may not fully, or even accurately, depict the situation of the audience to which they write.'²⁷ This view can make one cautious of reading too much into the text and being certain of meaning. But as Vanhoozer

²⁶ Richard Ascough, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: Encountering the Christ Group at Thessalonike* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 1.

²⁷ Ibid.

writes, ‘for while our knowledge of textual meaning may never be absolute, it may nevertheless be adequate’ for in it we confront ‘the face or voice’ of the author.²⁸

In seeking this meaning it is important not to fall into the pitfalls of pride or sloth, but rather exhibit humility in the exegetical task listening to the many interpretive voices who have gone before. As this process is undertaken we can proceed with confidence knowing that there is meaning in the text to be uncovered.²⁹ The arguments therefore that come from this paper will be based strongly on exegesis but will make use of what is known about Paul’s and the Thessalonians’ historical context.

3.3 *Structure*

There is little consensus to the structure of 1 Thessalonians for different methodological approaches do not agree on the divisions in the passage. Even within the same methodological discipline there is little consensus.³⁰ The following break up follows Weima who focuses on the text, but the headings have

²⁸ Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in this text? : the Bible, the reader, and the morality of literary knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 458-59.

²⁹ Ibid., 462-63.

³⁰ Cf. the differing views within the epistolary methodology for an example.

been changed to reflect this author's understanding of the text.³¹ Where the breakup choice affects the exegesis of the passage that is being studied, justification will be made in the exegesis for the structural choice based on the text. For example, whether 5:1 starts a new pericope or continues the argument from 4:13. The following structure of 1 Thessalonians will be used:

1. Waiting for Jesus
 - a. Letter Opening (1:1)
 - b. Thanksgiving (1:2-10)
2. Waiting in response to the gospel (2:1-3:13)
 - a. Waiting and Paul's ministry (2:1-16)
 - b. Waiting and encouragement (2:17-3:10)
 - c. Transitional prayers (3:11-13)
3. Waiting and godly living
 - a. Conduct that pleases God (4:1-12)
 - b. Encouraged by eschatological hope (4:13-18)
 - c. Encouraged by eschatological living (5:1-11)
 - d. Church life (5:12-22)

³¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, vii.

4. Letter closing (5:23-28)

3.4 *Authorship*

1 Thessalonians is accepted to be authentically Pauline with no serious challenge being made to Pauline authorship in the past century.³²

3.5 *Conflict in Thessalonica*

3.5.1 **Introduction**

One of the questions that has to be discussed before studying the Day of the Lord motif is whether the Thessalonian congregation was in the midst of conflict, as this is an issue that will affect the meaning of key texts where the motif is present. Current debate disagrees as to whether there was conflict and so comment is needed.

3.5.2 **Conflict at Conversion**

The Thessalonian church was established in the midst of conflict. Paul in 1:6 reports how the Thessalonians received the gospel in much θλίψει (affliction). Again in 2:2 Paul declared the gospel of God in the midst of ἀγῶνι (conflict). The

³² Ibid., 41.

noun ἄγών, while literally meaning race or competition, is accepted to have a metaphorical meaning. Still notes ‘some think it refers to Paul’s intrapersonal psychological conflict and anxiety, others contend that Paul uses the term to describe the exertion entailed in the proclamation of the gospel.’³³ While both are possible interpretations of ἄγών, a further and more likely interpretation is that ἄγών is referring to external conflict by those opposed to their ministry. This view has ‘overwhelming support’ in scholarship.³⁴ In further support of this, 2:17 suggests some form of unwilling separation. In 2:17 Paul and his companions were ἀπορφανισθέντες (separated), as a parent from a child, from the Thessalonians.³⁵ The verse makes clear this separation was physical, ‘in person and not in heart’ implying that Paul was forced to leave.

Secondary sources also support the notion that the Thessalonian church was established amid conflict. The most well-known secondary source is Acts 17:1-10 where Luke recounts Paul’s missionary activity in founding the church. This source has had its reliability questioned by scholars. For instance, Sanders credits Acts with no historical reliability saying ‘one simply cannot turn to Acts for direct

³³ Todd Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica : A Pauline Church and Its Neighbours* (London : Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), 128.

³⁴ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 132.

³⁵ BDAG: 119-120

information about Christianity.³⁶ However, there is good reason to reject this premise. Still, takes a cautious approach towards Acts 17 and looks at how the information in Acts could be accurate historically. While not accepting the whole pericope, some parts appear stylised and shaped by Luke's own interests, he concludes that, 'it appears to be accurate in reporting that Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica because of conflict with his fellow Jews.'³⁷

3.5.3 Continuing Conflict

Having established that there was conflict at the foundation of the Thessalonian church, it is also clear that the conflict centred on Paul and his missionary activity.

There is evidence within 1 Thessalonians that suggests the Thessalonian church was experiencing some kind of conflict. This is most clear in 2:14-16 where Paul writes ἐπάθετε (you suffered).³⁸ A comparative clause, introduced by καθώς,

³⁶ J. T. Sanders, "Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire : A Conversation with Rodney Stark," *Sociological Analysis* 53, no. 4 (1992): 435.

³⁷ Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica : A Pauline Church and its Neighbours*, 81.

³⁸ For a convincing argument for the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16 cf. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 161-67; Contra. Birger Pearson, "1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: a Deutero-Pauline interpolation," *Harvard Theological Review* 64, no. 1 (1971): 79-94.

makes clear that the Thessalonian suffering is just like the suffering the churches of Judea experienced at the hand of the Jews, whereas the Thessalonians are suffering at the hands of their own συμφυλετῶν (countrymen). This leads Weima to conclude the Thessalonians are suffering for their new-found faith.³⁹ Malherbe, however, disagrees suggesting there is no conflict in Thessalonica, but that the word πάσχω refers to a 'distressed and anguished heart' which the Thessalonian Christians are experiencing because of their new way of life. Furthermore, in 3:1-5, Paul is anxious about the psychological state of the believers and how it is affecting their faith.⁴⁰ This is a possible interpretation as πάσχω can mean 'experience something'. However, this meaning is only used once in the New Testament and the contextual reference to the Judean churches suggests strongly that a physical conflict is present.⁴¹ Barclay also notes the likeness made between Paul and Jesus and how they both had external social pressures applied to them, and how this similar situation should be applied to the Thessalonians.⁴² More likely Paul sends Timothy 'as an effort to sustain them' in the midst of the

³⁹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 166.

⁴⁰ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 77.

⁴¹ BDAG: s.v. πάσχω

⁴² John Barclay, "Conflict in Thessalonica," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1993): 514.

persecution.⁴³ Based on the weight of this evidence, the conflict comes from external sources.

The source of the conflict is identified in 2:14 as συμφυλετῶν (fellow countryman), which raises the question which group of people this refers to. Barclay cites how Paul is always careful to distinguish between Jew and Gentile and would not refer to Jews using συμφυλετῶν.⁴⁴ Still investigates the historical likelihood that Jews would have persecuted a Christian minority in Thessalonica. He writes, ‘Thessalonian Jews likely would not have been powerful or daring enough to oppose Gentiles on their own. To do so would have put in jeopardy their own religious liberty as well as their potentially precarious social standing in Gentile society... Nonetheless, there is no sidestepping the fact that Paul indicates only Gentile, not Jewish opposition for his [Gentile] converts.’⁴⁵ Weima is more cautious noting, that συμφυλετῶν is a geographical reference and a term for specific people group, and hence could include Jews. Weima also cites Acts 17 as evidence of hostile Jews, concluding συμφυλετῶν is predominantly gentiles with

⁴³ Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian correspondence* (ed. Funk; United States: Fortress Press, 1986), 93.

⁴⁴ Barclay, "Conflict in Thessalonica," 524.

⁴⁵ Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica : A Pauline Church and its Neighbours*, 225.

the possibility open that Jews took part.⁴⁶ The source then is fellow Thessalonian countryman, which are most likely gentile but may have small Jewish representation.

The conflict could have exhibited itself through social exclusion, Roman distrust of foreign religions, active Christian proselytism and the perception of being subversive: to family structures, other religions and the government – saying there is another king other than Caesar.⁴⁷ At the heart of this conflict, however, is the issue of the apocalyptic gospel that caused this change.⁴⁸ Barclay notes ‘for the Thessalonians, the apocalyptic contours of Paul's message stand out as a ready explanation of their *thlipsis* and provide the necessary means for enduring it.’⁴⁹

3.5.4 Conclusion

The Thessalonian church was founded amid external conflict. This conflict ensued from the local Gentiles as the Thessalonians shaped their life around the apocalyptic gospel that Paul preached.

⁴⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 168.

⁴⁷ Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica : A Pauline Church and its Neighbours*, 233-51.

⁴⁸ Barclay, "Conflict in Thessalonica," 519; Still, *Conflict at Thessalonica : A Pauline Church and its Neighbours*, 233.

⁴⁹ Barclay, "Conflict in Thessalonica," 519.

3.6 *Summary*

A survey of methodology has shown that there is little consensus towards an approach to 1 Thessalonians. The current approach towards 1 Thessalonians for this study focuses primarily on the Greek text of 1 Thessalonians and will make use of what can be known concerning Paul, his rhetorical and literary style and the Thessalonian's historical context.

First Thessalonians is authored by the apostle the Paul, making it necessary to understand the influences and background which would have shaped his use of the Day of the Lord so it can be understood in the context of 1 Thessalonians.

The Thessalonian church was also founded in the midst of conflict and continued to experience conflict. The conflict arose because of the apocalyptic gospel Paul preached and so into this setting of conflict that Paul writes exhorts the Thessalonians concerning the Day of the Lord.

Part 2

Paul's Understanding of
the Day of the Lord

4 The Framework of Paul's Understanding of the Day of the Lord

In the literature review and in the preliminary issues it was identified that Paul's background and understanding of the Day of the Lord was important for understanding how he uses and appropriates the motif in 1 Thessalonians. The following explores whether Paul was influenced by the Jewish Scriptures or by the Hellenistic culture of the first century in his understanding of the Day of the Lord. The outcome of this chapter will determine what sources are studied in the following chapter, giving background to the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians.

The Day of the Lord is a motif that first appears in the Old Testament Jewish writings. It cannot, however, be taken for granted that Paul assumed the Jewish understanding of the motif. Beckwith has concluded that there is 'truly ancient

evidence for a collection of Jewish Scriptures, existing in the New Testament period and the centuries leading up to it, which were believed to be divinely inspired and to possess divine authority.’¹ The question then arises was it these Jewish Scriptures that framed Paul’s use of the Day of the Lord motif? Or as Bultmann suggests, was Paul ‘standing within the frame of Hellenistic Christianity [where] he raised the theological motifs that were at work in the proclamation of the Hellenistic church’?²

The favoured approach of scholars is to begin by trying to ascertain how much of Paul’s upbringing was influenced by Hellenism or by Judaism. This method, however, does not answer any questions as Paul rarely speaks of his upbringing and while historical speculative generalisations can be made, these do not necessarily give us insight into Paul’s upbringing. Sanders’ methodological approach is different; he bases his work on what we can understand from Paul’s texts. Sanders notes that there are two things we definitely know about Paul: first,

¹ Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament canon of the New Testament church and its background in early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 435.

² Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2007), 187.

that Paul was a Jew; and second he wrote in Greek.³ Sanders highlights that within Paul's Jewish education he would have memorised the Bible. He writes 'memorisation of the Bible is almost self-evident to the reader of rabbinic literature' and concludes based on Paul's quotes that 'as a boy and youth [Paul] studied the Greek Bible, which means he memorised it either whole or in part.'⁴ Sanders then gives an example of how Paul used Ezekiel 36:27 and 37:14 in 1 Thessalonians 4:8 as evidence of how Paul had memorised scriptures and made reference to it, even in texts that do not explicitly mention Old Testament texts such as 1 Thessalonians. Furthermore, the lack of quotations from the 'ordinary *gymnasion*' in Paul's works leads Sanders to conclude it unlikely that Paul attended regular Hellenistic school.⁵

Having ascertained that Paul knew the Scriptures well, Sanders goes on to make the following points. First, Paul's theology was a form of modified monotheism, where the true God was the God of Israel. Second, Paul's view of time and history was Jewish where there is a beginning point that is 'moving towards a conclusion'

³ Sanders, "Paul's Jewishness," in *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. Thomas G. Casey; Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press ; Rome : Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 51.

⁴ Ibid., 56.

⁵ Ibid., 61. (Emphasis original)

and how Paul's view is highly eschatological, focusing on the end times. Third, Paul's understanding of himself as an apostle to the Gentiles fits with a Jewish vision of the world, where all nations come to God. Lastly, Paul's ethics were Jewish. This is observed in Paul's opposition to same-sex relationships in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and Romans 1:26-27. Sanders concludes, 'Thus, Paul's education, youth, theology, worldview, career and opinions about correct behaviour were all distinctively and deeply Jewish.'⁶

The possibility that Paul outgrew his Jewish origins and took on the Hellenism of his time is addressed by Sanders' methodology whereby he looks not at a historical reconstruction of Paul's youth, but rather at the works of Paul himself to draw his conclusions. Sanders acknowledges that Paul left his Jewish roots when he became a follower of Jesus because conversion creates a separate and distinct group from Judaism, but even then, Sanders helpfully comments, 'we cannot think that at any point Paul would have rejected his ethnic identity. He was a Jew who was in Christ.'⁷

⁶ Ibid., 62-63.

⁷ Ibid., 68.

Schubert takes a similar methodological approach to Sanders and analyses the text of Paul's thanksgivings, but rather concludes that Paul was influenced by Hellenism rather than Judaism. He analyses and compares Paul's prayers to that of Hellenistic thanksgivings and in conclusion writes, 'Paul was not just a Jew who was "exposed" to Hellenistic "influences", but that he was an indigenous Hellenist.'⁸ O'Brien evaluates Schubert's argument and rather than drawing the conclusion that Paul was a Hellenist, notes how the structure of Paul's thanksgivings were Hellenistic, but the 'contents showed the influence of Jewish thought'.⁹ Weima concurs with O'Brien when he writes, 'to a large extent the Pauline thanksgiving owes its existence and structure to the standard epistolary form in Hellenistic letter writing, its contents are influenced by OT and Jewish thought'.¹⁰ Further to this, Aernie, highlights that Paul never references a Hellenistic education but rather 'accentuated his Jewish heritage and upbringing' considering himself a 'Hebrew of Hebrews'.¹¹ Martin Hengel agrees when he writes that Paul, 'the Pharisee connected with Jewish Palestine stands in the foreground, to whom Jerusalem seems to be more important than anywhere else',

⁸ Paul Schubert, *Form and function of the Pauline thanksgivings* (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1939), 184.

⁹ Peter O'Brien, *Introductory thanksgivings in the letters of Paul* (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, Ore, 2009), 11.

¹⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 74.

¹¹ Aernie, *Day of the Lord motif in 2 Thessalonians*, 31.

highlighting that Paul does not think his time in Tarsus is worth mentioning.¹²

Hengel, who traces the possible influences of Paul, concludes that the Pharisees had ‘a tendency towards a rigorous accentuation of the Torah.’¹³ This is not to say that Paul was not exposed to Hellenism, rather that Paul’s Jewish roots and his study of the Old Testament were his locus for his worldview and theology.

The implication of Paul’s Jewish background for the writing of 1 Thessalonians is that, despite his predominantly Gentile readership, his understanding for the theological concepts raised find their origin in the Jewish Old Testament Scriptures. This includes the Day of the Lord motif.

One example of Paul relying on his Jewish understanding within 1 Thessalonians is Paul’s use of the metaphor of the armour in 5:8. Paul ascribes to the Thessalonians who belong to the day, the armour of faith and love as a breast plate and the hope of salvation as a helmet. This armour motif finds its origin in Isaiah 59:17 where Yahweh is going to come and bring salvation. Paul appropriates this motif and applies it to the Thessalonians who have been appointed to salvation

¹² Martin Hengel, *The pre-Christian Paul* (trans. Bowden: London : SCM Press, 1991), 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

through Jesus Christ (5:9). Most modern commentators agree that Isaiah 59:17 is the referent and influence for this verse.¹⁴ Richard acknowledges this, but rather than understand Paul to have been directly influenced by Isaiah, speculates he was influenced by a teaching tradition that incorporated Isaiah 59.¹⁵ However, given Paul's background, the more likely scenario is Paul was directly influenced by the Jewish Scriptures.

The Day of the Lord is another prominent motif within the Jewish Scriptures that Paul utilises and appropriates to the Thessalonians. The motif finds its origin in the Jewish Scriptures, but the question arises of whether the motif developed in the intertestamental period. If it did, it would be expected this would have influenced Paul's use of the motif. Glasson, motivated by some of the claims by scholars that Paul was influenced by intertestamental use of the motif of the Parousia (which he equates with the Day of the Lord), surveyed the

¹⁴ Colin Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians* (Society for New Testament Studies: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 363. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 297. Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 303. Luckensmeyer after acknowledging other possible associations that could be helpful in understanding the text accredits Paul's use of the image to Isaiah 59.

¹⁵ Earl Richard and Daniel Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Collegeville, Minn. : Liturgical Press, 1995), 255.

intertestamental texts for the Day of the Lord.¹⁶ Glasson shows convincingly that the motif is not taken up in a serious way in the intertestamental period, and hence does not form a late Jewish view of the Day of the Lord which Paul would rely upon. He concludes 'although attempts are made from time to time to bring supporting evidence for this 'late Jewish view' nothing cogent has been produced from the B.C. period, that is, from any source which could have influenced Jesus or Paul.'¹⁷ This further supports the idea that Paul relied on the Jewish Scriptures for the motif of the Day of the Lord when he appropriates it to the Thessalonian context.

One other source for Paul's framework needs to be considered and that is the impact of the Jesus tradition on Paul's theology and therefore his use of the Day of the Lord motif. While Paul's use of the motif has its origins in the Jewish Scriptures, there is the possibility that his understanding of the motif was transformed by the Jesus tradition. It is no understatement to suggest that Paul's life was transformed by his Damascus road vision of the risen Jesus. In Galatians, Paul himself speaks of how he received the message of the gospel by a revelation

¹⁶ Thomas Glasson, "Theophany and parousia," *New Testament Studies* 34, no. 2 (1988): 260.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

from Jesus himself (1:9). This turned him from persecuting the church to proclaiming the good news of the gospel and building the church. What was the effect of this transformation on Paul's understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures and hence on his understanding of the Day of the Lord? Paul's approach to understanding Jesus was to view Jesus within the framework of Jewish understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. In this framework, Jesus is the fulfilment of these scriptures. This is evidenced in Paul's outlining of the gospel in Romans 1:1-4, which is accepted today in scholarship as authentically Pauline.¹⁸ Verse 1 begins by using the name Paul instead of Saul, thus acknowledging his transformed life. Paul goes on to ground his ministry and his gospel in his Jewish roots. He does this first by using the phrase 'servant of Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ', for as Dunn notes, the phrase 'servant of God' is how Jewish worshipers referred to themselves and here Paul appropriates that phrase to Jesus.¹⁹ A further point which Dunn does not concede, which would strengthen this argument is if the use of Χριστός retained any of its titular significance with reference to the Jewish Messiah. Hurtado in his tome on Christology notes, 'in Pauline circles, it remained the case that to refer to Jesus as "Christ" (with or

¹⁸ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 2.

¹⁹ James Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (vol. 38A; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 7.

without the definite article) was to assert his significance as the divinely approved figure who acts as the eschatological agent of God', thus supporting its Jewish referent.²⁰ In verse two the use of the relative pronoun ὃ refers back to the εὐαγγέλιον (gospel) in verse 1 for which Paul has been set apart by God. This gospel is what God has προεπηγγείλατο (promised beforehand) through the prophets. The use of the term 'prophets' coupled with the phrase 'in the holy Scriptures' refers to the established body of writings which would have been accepted by both Jews and Christians. Furthermore, in verse 3, Jesus is identified as being a descendant of David, a reference to the Jewish King to whom God promised everlasting kingship (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chronicles 22:10, Psalm 89:4, 29, 36-37). According to Dunn, this is 'a clear assertion that Jesus was the anointed Son of David, the royal Messiah, the fulfillment of prophetic hopes long cherished among the people of Israel for the age to come.'²¹ A further, but less conclusive, piece of evidence is in verse 4 where Paul calls Jesus the Son of God, a title known to be used of the Jewish Messiah.²² Dunn also notes that for Paul 'the fact of Jesus' Jewishness was something to be affirmed and celebrated.'²³ This brief overview

²⁰ Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ : devotion to Jesus in earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 249.

²¹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 12.

²² Ibid., 14.

²³ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Em. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 206.

of Paul's gospel demonstrates that Paul understood Jesus in terms of fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy.²⁴

We conclude with Aernie, 'Paul remained a faithful Jew who had come to the realization that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of the "law and the prophets," who would one day return for his remnant' and 'the apostle gleaned his theology primarily from the Old Testament, which he understood to be culminated in Christ.'²⁵ This means it is appropriate, when seeking to understand Paul's use of the Day of the Lord motif, to search the Jewish Scriptures for how it was understood before we can see how Paul understands and uses the motif in 1 Thessalonians. This will be the function of the following chapter.

²⁴ For further passages that support this view cf. 1 Cor 15:3-5; Rom 10:11 and Gal 3:8, 16.

²⁵ Aernie, *Day of the Lord motif in 2 Thessalonians*, 176.

5 The Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures

Having concluded in the previous chapter that Paul's understanding of the Day of the Lord motif comes primarily from the Jewish Scriptures, this chapter will investigate the text of the Jewish Scriptures for how it presents the motif. As identified by the literature review this study is needed due the wide-ranging methodologies and conclusions concerning the Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures. The purpose is to see how Paul would have understood the motif from within these Scriptures, and provide a background for how he applies the motif in 1 Thessalonians. Further, as identified in the introduction, one of the goals of this chapter is to identify the common metaphors and concepts that are associated with

the Day of the Lord to identify how Paul uses the motif more broadly in 1 Thessalonians.

5.1 Methodology for this chapter

In any discussion of the Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures the question needs to be addressed of where to start and what to include in the study. There are several factors that influence this decision which the literature review raises; these include the historicity and origin of the term, whether a canonical approach is used, and what references are included in the study. Most studies surveyed in the literature review do not comprehensively study every Day of the Lord occurrence within the Jewish Scriptures but select only a sample. A further question that was raised and needs answering is whether Day of the Lord should be restricted to when the phrase is used explicitly or do constructs that use ‘Day of’ refer also to the Day of the Lord. Each of these questions will be addressed in turn.

A key concern as identified by the literature review is where does the phrase Day of the Lord originally come from, for the assumption is that in being able to understand its original historical meaning the reader will be able to better understand its usage in the prophets.¹ In determining an origin most studies start

¹ Cf. Mowinckel, von Rad and Weiss

with Amos 5:18 as it is identified as the first occurrence of the motif in the prophets. Notably von Rad who makes an historical reconstruction of the phrase does not use Amos 5:18 for he determines that the Day of the Lord in 5:18-20 is an isolated text within the book of Amos and does not provide enough basis for historical reconstruction.² Von Rad then begins his investigation into the Day of the Lord starting with Isaiah 13. He does so on the basis of it providing 'a more secure foundation for examination' citing Amos' use as isolated and unequivocal.³ The methodology von Rad uses, however, has come under critique, with it being stated his reasoning is 'hardly convincing' as he has limited the passages examined to support his thesis regarding the origin of the motif.⁴ No scholarly research followed von Rad's lead by starting with Isaiah, with most preferring Amos. Cathcart notes concerning the issue that Amos 'is the only safe place to start' given that interpretation of the Day of the Lord motif is full of speculation.⁵ Within this historical perspective there is a lot of emphasis on where the study should begin and multiple attempts to determine the origin of the term, but there

² von Rad, "Day of Yahweh," 98.

³ Ibid., 105.

⁴ Hoffmann, "The day of the Lord," 38.

⁵ Kevin Cathcart, "The Day of the Lord," *The Anchor Bible dictionary* II:84-85.

are no agreed upon rules as to what then should be included in the study or how the meaning should be determined.

A different methodological approach has focussed on the canonical reading with attention being focused on the book of the twelve.⁶ This approach is concerned with how the Day of the Lord motif is used in the text and its meaning is determined by its function within the text. As these studies have focussed on the book of the twelve, the starting point is Joel followed by Amos. Studies within this approach also limit their scope to keep their research contained. While an approach like this assumes canonical unity the strength of this approach is that it relies on the text as it has been passed down to determine meaning. This approach limits historical subjectivity, however by only focussing on the book of the twelve it does not include significant prophets who use the motif such as Isaiah and Ezekiel.

In choosing an approach it needs to be considered how Paul would have understood this motif. As a Pharisee he would have known Israel's history and so, it is likely that if a history of the Day of the Lord motif existed apart from the

⁶ Cf. Nogalski, Rendtorff

minor prophets that he would have been aware of it. While no historical position is conclusive, a common thread in the three major constructions of the historical perspective is the notion of theophany, where God enters the world he has created. At this point, caution about being anachronistic is needed, for Paul did not have a modern day understanding of historical criticism and what Paul's historical understanding might have been is mere speculation. However, the canonical view cannot be ignored either, for Paul would have also memorised the Hebrew Bible and would have received, read and memorised the Book of the Twelve in its canonical form. The canon that is designated 'Scriptures' by both Jesus and Paul is the Jewish Scriptures that has been passed down in the Christian tradition and, according to Beckwith, would have been well established by Jesus' and Paul's time.⁷ While Rendtorff limits his study of the Day of the Lord to the Book of the Twelve, Paul would have been influenced by other prophetic books in the canon, such as Isaiah and Ezekiel and so these texts will be included in the study.⁸ Based on the conclusions of chapter 4 and the work of Glasson, the intertestamental period did not develop the motif beyond the Jewish Scriptures and so they will not be included in the following study.

⁷ Beckwith, *The Old Testament canon of the New Testament church and its background in early Judaism*, 91-93, 165.

⁸ Rendtorff, "Alas for the day : the "day of the Lord" in the Book of the Twelve."

This study will acknowledge the motif, Day of the Lord, is one used in history and will start with Amos, this will allow comment on whether the motif is changing over time in the Jewish Scriptures or whether it remains a static motif. Rather than try to create a historical reconstruction of the motif, the meaning of the motif will be derived from exegesis of the text of Jewish Scriptures which Paul would have relied upon. Given the wide scope and use of the Day of the Lord in Jewish Scriptures it is necessary to limit the scope of this study to a few representative prophets that will help us understand how Paul understood the motif. While this may colour results of survey in the past, the selection below attempts be broad enough so as to avoid this possible problem. Our study of Amos will establish the motif's first use followed by how Joel and Isaiah use the motif in a similar time. Isaiah is also included for Paul alludes to Isaiah 59 in 1 Thessalonians 5 where he speaks of the Day of the Lord making it clear that Isaiah has informed Day of the Lord theology. Ezekiel and Malachi are included for they provide insight into the use of the motif post-exile, with Malachi being the latest evidence of how the motif was understood likely affecting how Paul would have understood the motif.

Within the following study the scope of the Day of the Lord motif needs to be determined. Should motif include only explicit references of the Day of the Lord

or do references such phrases ‘on the day of battle’, ‘day of the whirlwind’ (Amos 1:14), ‘flee away naked in that day’ (Amos 2:16) and ‘day of disaster’ (Amos 6:3) be included within the study of the motif. Commentators such as von Rad see the Day of the Lord in Amos 5:18-20 as an isolated text within the book of Amos, and hence only focusses upon the explicit reference.⁹ However, Weiss adopts a broader approach including the ‘Day of’ phrases.¹⁰ Hoffman disagrees, positing that if the other references to ‘day’ were referring to the Day of the Lord, the people would not have looked forward to this day in 5:18.¹¹ Contrary to Hoffman, it is possible that Amos prophesies in 5:18 ‘do not desire the Day of the Lord’, using fresh language for the same concept presented in 2:16 and 3:14, to get the attention of Israel because in their stubbornness they failed to heed God’s word. An example of this obstinacy is recorded in chapter 7 where Amaziah the priest of Bethel, instead of listening to the prophet, seeks to exile him saying ‘get out you seer’ (7:12). Nogalski, in a more recent study from a textual point of view makes the claim that ‘any study of the day of YHWH must include more than the phrase יום יהוה’, noting that ‘day of YHWH appears in variant forms’ and that the phrases “‘on that day” and “in those days” manifest conceptual similarities’ to the

⁹ von Rad, "Day of Yahweh," 98.

¹⁰ Weiss, "Day of the Lord," 47.

¹¹ Hoffmann, "The day of the Lord," 41.

Day of the Lord.¹² In light of this, constructs of the Day of Lord motif will be included within the scope of the motif for this study.

In summary, the following is a survey of selected representative Jewish Scriptures with a focus on the meaning of the motif as it is present in the text. The Day of the Lord motif is not limited to the explicit references but includes where the language of the Day is implicit within the text.

5.2 *Exegesis of Jewish Scriptures*

5.2.1 **Amos**

The book of Amos is made up of sayings, visions, a short narrative and excerpts from an old Hymn about Yahweh.¹³ The collection that makes up the book of Amos are interrelated, but it is not possible 'to infer either a strictly chronological or a strictly thematic ordering for most of the oracles.'¹⁴ Hubbard, however, is more optimistic when he says,

¹² Nogalski, "The Day(s) of YHWH in the book of the twelve," 193.

¹³ Stuart Douglas, *Hosea-Jonah* (vol. 31; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 286.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 287.

What we now have is a closely crafted, artfully stylized composition. We should look more at it, rather than at how it got to be what it is..., We have finely woven threads of composition to which the people of God through the ages have clung and from which they have received warning, comfort and instruction.¹⁵

Further, Anderson and Freedman note in their analysis of historical criticism,

If we finish with a reluctance to discard any part of the book as “certainly not Amos”, it is partly because we have come to the conclusion, after working through the whole business many times and weighing all arguments, that there are no compelling reasons against accepting most if not all of the book as possibly, indeed probably (we could never say certainly) Amos.¹⁶

¹⁵ David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary* (25; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 104-05.

¹⁶ Francis Anderson and David Freedman, *Amos: A new translation with introduction and commentary* (New York, NY: DoubleDay, 1989), 144; cf. Rosenbaum Stanley, *Amos of Israel: A new interpretation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 84.

In light of this, Hubbard's view that the text of Amos can be read as is will be utilised in the following exegesis.¹⁷

Amos 5:18 introduces the phrase **יום יהוה** (Day of the Lord). As discussed in the literature review this is the first time the phrase is used. The Day of the Lord, as indicated by the particle marker is the object of the verb **אִוָּה** (to desire). It is clear by the interjection **הוֹי** (woe) in the position of emphasis at the beginning of the phrase, that this day is not something that the people of Israel ought to be looking forward to. For as Niehaus comments the masculine plural verb, 'you who desire' is a verb of direct address and 'addresses those who are to receive judgment.'¹⁸ This clearly is not what the recipients, God's people, expected.¹⁹ The verb of desire expresses a deep longing for, even a coveting of Yahweh's deliverance of his people and judgment on their enemies.²⁰ That the judgment is directed upon Yahweh's people and not their enemies would have been a surprise.²¹ Context strongly suggests that Amos here is correcting a view about the Day of the Lord

¹⁷ Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 105.

¹⁸ Jeff Niehaus, "Amos," in *The minor prophets : an exegetical and expository commentary* (ed. McComiskey; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 428. cf; Douglas, *Hosea-Jonah*, 352.

¹⁹ Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 521.

²⁰ Cf. Ibid.

²¹ Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 189.

rather than introducing the motif to the people for the first time.²² The rhetorical question, ‘why would you have the Day of the Lord?’ is asked with the answer that the Day of the Lord is darkness and not light. The image of darkness and light is further expounded in verses 19 and 20 where the strong visual images of fleeing from a lion to safety and meeting a bear, and resting on a wall and being bitten by a serpent, paint a picture of going from one danger to another. The יום יהוה (Day of the Lord) in verse 20 is going to be like this for God’s people, where it brings darkness and not light. Anderson and Freedman identify these terms of darkness and light as ‘abstract and metaphysical’, and their meaning cannot be ascertained.²³ Hubbard however notes based on context that a meaning can be discerned, darkness here refers to destruction and light refers to being safe.²⁴ The Day of the Lord is a day of future judgment in this pericope, particularly directed at God’s people Israel.

There are three phrases that use the term ‘Day’ prior to 5:18. In 1:14 Yahweh, on the ‘day of battle’ goes to war against Ammon. In 2:16 Yahweh is judging Israel, causing panic and fright so that בַּגְבוּר (the mighty), who were likely the best

²² Ibid.

²³ Anderson and Freedman, *Amos*, 521.

²⁴ Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 191.

soldiers of Israel, run away naked ‘in that day’.²⁵ Even the mightiest of God’s people will not escape. The third phrase is in 3:14 where Yahweh’s judgment on his people for their sin will be complete. These two phrases speak of a final judgment upon Yahweh’s people in a similar way addressed in 5:18. Further references to the motif ‘Day of the Lord’ are: 6:3, where God will bring judgment on the complacent in the form of exile; 8:3 and 8:9 where God is going to end joy in the temple for God will come and bring judgment on his own people. The final reference in 9:11, ביום ההוא (in that day) provides a glimmer of hope for God’s people, for amid judgment he is going to restore David’s fallen shelter, he will גדרתי (repair), קים (restore) and בניתיה (rebuild). The day is not only going to be a day of total and complete destruction as God brings his wrath upon the nations and Israel, God is also going to remember his covenant with David and restore his people, delivering them from exile. Further this links the motif with Davidic Kingship and starts to develop the possibility of the Messiah being associated with the Day of the Lord.

The Day of the Lord in Amos is the day that Yahweh comes in judgment (3:14; 5:18; 6:3; 8:3, 9) and provides salvation (9:11). The judgement is referring to local

²⁵ Ibid., 153.

judgement on Israel (2:16; 3:14; 5:18). It will be a day of darkness and gloom (5:18-20) which no one will escape (3:14). The motif is used as a warning of the exile to Israel, as well as a call to repentance, holding out the hope of a restored Israel with a Davidic King for those who repent (9:11).

5.2.2 Joel

While the focus in Amos is on the Day of the Lord being against Israel, the focus in Joel is on both God's people and her enemies. The prophecy of Joel is taken by most current scholars to be one continuous prophecy.²⁶ The historical background of Joel is 'hard to reconstruct with accuracy', due to the scarcity of historical markers within the text.²⁷ Modern scholarship dates the prophecy of Joel 500 BCE, however, this too is contested.²⁸ What is possible, however, is to read the prophecy as a whole and see how the Day of the Lord motif functions within it and so understand how Paul would have understood the motif.

²⁶ James Crenshaw, *Joel: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (vol. 24c; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995), 30.

²⁷ William LaSor, et al., *Old Testament survey : the message, form, and background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI W.B. Eerdmans, 1996), 376.

²⁸ Bakon, "The day of the Lord," 150.

In chapter 1, Joel introduces a plague of locusts which are completely ravaging God's people. Dillard describes the locust plague as having,

serious consequences of the health and mortality of an affected population and for a region's economy. Scarcity of food resulting from the swarm's attack would bring the population to subsistence intake or less, would make the spread of disease among a weakened populace easier, would eliminate any trace from surplus food products, and would stimulate high inflation in the costs of food products.²⁹

Allen connects this day as an outworking of the covenant curse in Deuteronomy 28:38 where God's covenant people 'will harvest little, because locusts will devour it.'³⁰ It is a direct result of Israel's disobedience towards God that his people are suffering judgment. Verses 13 and 14 sound a call to God's people to turn to him in prayer before the coming Day of the Lord. In verse 15 the Day of the Lord is imminent, the locust plagues being a 'harbinger' of the more final

²⁹ Raymond Dillard, "Joel," in *The Minor Prophets: an exegetical and expository commentary* (ed. McComiskey; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 255-56.

³⁰ Leslie Allen, "Joel," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition* (ed. D. A. Carson; Bath, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 783.

judgment of the Day of the Lord.³¹ The Day of the Lord is a day when God will judge all evil and God's covenant people are not excluded from this day. Verses 16-20 describe the disastrous effects of the Day of the Lord upon God's people.

In chapter 2, the distress described in chapter 1 escalates from the contemporary to the eschatological Day of the Lord.³² There are a few key things to note regarding the Day of the Lord. First, it is announced by a trumpet in verse 1: 'blow the trumpet, raise the alarm' which signals the day of battle.³³ Second, also in verse 1, the Day of the Lord is described once again as coming. Third, in verse 2, like in Amos, it is described as a day of darkness and gloom for an eschatological army is coming, an army that 'never was in ancient times, nor never will be in ages to come'. Verse 3 expands the imagery of the coming day of battle with the image of fire going before the army, where the plural construct לִפְנֵי (before them) refers back to the army in verse 2. Evidence of this event being a theophany is found in Joel 2:6 where the response to this army is anguish and faces turning pale, an appropriate response when faced with the judgment of God.³⁴ This is an allusion to Psalm 97 where in verse 1 Yahweh reigns and in verse 3 fire goes

³¹ Dillard, "Joel," 266.

³² Klein, "Day of the Lord," 524.

³³ Dillard, "Joel," 271.

³⁴ Ibid., 785.

before him.³⁵ Fire is a ‘mode of theophany’ within the Bible and so in Joel it is Yahweh who comes commanding his army.³⁶ Yahweh’s army is formidable and as verse 11 aptly describes, ‘The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty is the army that obeys his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?’³⁷ It is the description of an eschatological judgment that no one can escape. It is a judgment couched in terms of ‘ancient theophany language’ which is associated with Yahweh’s self-manifestation.³⁸

There is still, however, hope for God’s covenant people. Even though they themselves have been recipients of judgment, there is the possibility of escaping God’s final eschatological judgment. Verse 12 introduces a transition in the text with the marker נאם־יהוה (declares the Lord) introducing a new section. The desire of Yahweh, and the subject of the pericope, is that his people שבו (return) to him with their whole being and so escape the coming Day of the Lord. This return cannot simply be external but it must come from a broken heart that truly seeks

³⁵ Allen, "Joel," 784.

³⁶ Dillard, "Joel," 274.

³⁷ NIV®

³⁸ Crenshaw, *Joel*, 16.

Yahweh.³⁹ Verses 12-17 introduce the possibility of turning back to God, for he (in verse 13) is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love and so will relent, but there is still uncertainty. This is expressed in verse 14 where the subjunctive יִשׁוּב (He may turn) is used, for God is not bound to act if people repent, and hence the uncertainty. And so the priests pray and ask in verse 17 'Spare your people'. Then God promises to act in bringing about salvation and restoring his people from the plague of locusts in verses 18-27. Furthermore, verses 28-32 promises complete restoration of God's people with God promising to pour out his Spirit. This event is linked with the coming of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is no longer a day of despair but the events of this day 'are signals for assurances that Yahweh's victorious day for Israel is very near.'⁴⁰

Once God's people have responded to the call and are back in right relationship with him, the focus of the judgment changes from God's people in chapters 1-2 to God's enemies in chapter 3. The enemies will be judged by the Lord when they are gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat. In verse 1, the reference 'in those days' is a reference once again to the day of Lord. The judgment is also described in

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Klein, "Day of the Lord," 524.

verse 14 as the Day of the Lord being near with clear eschatological images being used such as the sun and moon being darkened. The eschatological judgment of God's enemies is framed in terms of the Day of the Lord. For God's people, however, it is a day where God is a refuge for his people in verse 16 and provides a safe dwelling for them.

In summing up Joel's contribution to the Day of the Lord, Barton comments that the Day of the Lord in Joel, 'will bring about a radical change in the order of the world, with 'the nations' being judged on a grand scale by Yahweh, who takes a seat within Israel to pronounce and execute his judgment. Second, the hope that all these things will happen is probably a hope of imminent divine intervention.'⁴¹ The Divine intervention is local with its focus on unfaithful Israel (1:16-20) but also eschatological with all the nations being judged (2:1-11; 3:1-14). It is a day of battle (2:1), being heralded by a trumpet call (2:1), and like Amos, it is a day of darkness and gloom (2:2). It is the Day when Yahweh himself will come (2:1). The prophet uses the Day of the Lord to call the people of Israel to repentance (2:12-17) with the promise of restoration for those who do repent (2:28-32).

⁴¹ Barton, "The Day of Yahweh in the minor prophets," 72.

5.2.3 Isaiah

There is a sharp division in scholarship concerning the unity of the book of Isaiah. Motyer calls for the book to be read as a unity, he writes, ‘No apology is needed for calling the Isaianic literature ‘Isaiah’s book’, ... there is no manuscript evidence other than for the literature as it stands.’⁴² The weight of evidence, when collected together supports a unity of Isaiah according to Motyer.⁴³ Brueggemann writes regarding the issue, ‘There is nothing intrinsically impossible about such an approach [reading Isaiah as a unity]. It is nonetheless important to note that with the rise of modern theories of knowledge and specifically given “historical criticism,” such an approach has been commonly rejected.’⁴⁴ Blenkinsopp, on the unity of Isaiah, writes ‘it is obviously possible, though perhaps not easy, to read the book of Isaiah as a rhetorical and structural unity... while disregarding the process by which it reached its present shape.’⁴⁵ This is a sharp division within scholarship that is not easily reconciled and addressing the arguments for and

⁴² Alec Motyer, *Isaiah : an introduction and commentary* (18; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 27.

⁴³ Ibid., 27-34; See also John Oswalt, *Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 33-41.

⁴⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, KY, 1998), 3.

⁴⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (vol. 19; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 83.

against are outside the scope of this thesis. For the purposes of this survey Isaiah 1-66 will be treated as one united book.

The first time the Day of the Lord motif appears in full is in 13:6 where it refers to the judgment being pronounced upon Babylon. Von Rad started his thesis of the Day of the Lord with this pericope noting elements of holy war where ‘the sanctified warriors’ (v.3) engage in God’s sacral war.⁴⁶ He notes that the Day of the Lord in this section refers to ‘the day of battle and the complete victory of Yahweh’.⁴⁷ While the context is the local judgment on Babylon the language, as von Rad implicitly points to, is universal in referent. Webb comments,

for Babylon was no newcomer to the world stage. It had a history reaching right back to the tower of Babel, and was therefore a fitting symbol that arrogant pomp and power of the world that were characteristic of the nations as a whole in their rebellion against God... The story of Babylon was, for him [Isaiah], the story of all nations that defy God.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ von Rad, "Day of Yahweh," 99.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (ed. Motyer; Nottingham, GB: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 81.

This accounts for the use eschatological language, where every human heart melts (v.7), and there is great darkness and God executes his judgment. Of note for Paul's use of the motif in 1 Thessalonians is that the metaphor of a woman in labour is used to describe the pain and agony the Day of the Lord will bring. The function of the metaphor is clear when viewed within the context of verse 8: the third person plural וְנִבְהָלוּ (they will be dismayed) introduces both the subject referring back to verse 7 which is everyone whose heart melts at Yahweh's coming. Not only are the people dismayed, but יִאָּחֲזוּן (they will be seized) by the pain and agony, the metaphor of labour conjures up images of anguish and highlights the peoples' vulnerability.⁴⁹ This metaphor is not referring to the timing of the event of Yahweh's judgment but the destruction it will cause amidst a people who live in rebellion to him. In saying this, however, the Day of the Lord is קָרוֹב (near, v.6) and it בָּא (comes, v.9) giving a clear picture and warning that this judgment is imminent, with both the local judgment on Babylon and the eschatological judgment of the nations in view.

Like Amos, the Day of the Lord motif is not restricted in Isaiah to only where the explicit term 'the Day of the Lord' is mentioned, but is referenced whenever the

⁴⁹ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 117.

‘Day of’ construct is used. In Isaiah 2:12 Yahweh of hosts has a day against all the proud and lofty, a day, in verse 17, where the high and lofty are brought low and Yahweh is exalted. The main difference between chapters 2 and 13 is that chapter 2 also specifically addresses Judah in the pronouncement of judgment in verse 6-11 before addressing the nations.⁵⁰ Yahweh has turned on his people because ‘Israel has been hopelessly unresponsive to Yahweh’s covenantal requirements.’⁵¹ If they do not turn from their pride and arrogance, Judah will also face Yahweh’s judgment when he comes on the Day of the Lord. Here judgment expresses an aspect of the Day of the Lord which is universal ‘settled against all without exception.’⁵² This judgment is expanded upon in chapter 3 with the image of Yahweh as the just judge in the courtroom (v.16) and the one who executes the judgment in verse 17ff. There is a theophanic characteristic to the judgment which the Day of the Lord will bring. Throughout the pericope the refrain ‘in that day’ is used to describe judgment, where judgment on Zion ‘merges with the great and final Day of the Lord.’⁵³

⁵⁰ Webb, *Isaiah*, 46.

⁵¹ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 28.

⁵² Alec Motyer, *The prophecy of Isaiah: an introduction and commentary* (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 62.

⁵³ Webb, *Isaiah*, 51.

Chapter 4:2 marks a transition in the larger pericope, changing the focus from judgment to the end of all things and the salvation which will occur after judgment. The refrain ‘in that day’ is used and describes the Branch of the Lord as being beautiful and glorious. There are two competing ideas as to what the Branch of the Lord refers to. Motyer sees the Branch pointing to the Messiah and his priestly and kingly offices, with a focus on the people who will be saved.⁵⁴ In this instance it is simply the first time that the term is used for this referent. Webb, on the other hand, sees the Branch as referring to the fulfilment of the ‘Lord’s saving purposes’, with the images of fruitful land (4:2), a holy city (4:3-4) and a canopy of glory (4:5-6) describing what the Branch will look like.⁵⁵ Webb acknowledges that the Branch does take on the more technical meaning in other books and even in Isaiah, but in context the Branch does not refer to the Messiah. Oswalt takes a middle approach and synthesises the two positions together: the Branch and the good that it brings can only occur in ‘the context of the fulfilment of the messianic promises’ and does not specify one or the other.⁵⁶ While Oswalt’s view is attractive, based on the context of the passage and given that the Branch idea is more fully developed through Isaiah, the Branch here is taken to refer to fulfilment

⁵⁴ Motyer, *Isaiah*, 59.

⁵⁵ Webb, *Isaiah*, 52-53; cf. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 41-42.

⁵⁶ Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 107.

of God's saving purposes following Webb. The use of the imagery here establishes a link with the Day of the Lord and the consummation of God's plan of salvation.

Chapter 11:10-11 develops the motif of the Branch. The Branch is described as the stump of Jesse and is introduced as a ruler who surpasses even David to become the ideal king.⁵⁷ This king comes bringing just judgment and peace to Jerusalem. Then the refrain 'in that day' in verse 10, which functions as an explanatory note on what has preceded in the verse, introduces the concept of the Day of the Lord. There is an eschatological link looking forward to the future restoration, which fits with the flexibility of the motif of the Day of the Lord. This passage links the Day of the Lord and salvation with a righteous judge and the promised Messiah in the line of David. This link, while being noteworthy, should not by itself form the basis of Paul's understanding of the motif Day of the Lord as it is an isolated text in the Day of the Lord literature. It is, however, the beginning of tying the motifs of Messiah and Day of the Lord together, laying a framework for Paul.

⁵⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 263.

Further references to the Day of the Lord in Isaiah develop the motif. Isaiah 34:8 has a further reference to the Day of the Lord's vengeance which, like Isaiah 13, presents God's judgment in its finality against Zion's enemies. Isaiah 47:9 references a single day in which judgment will come upon the Babylonian city, which is personified as becoming a widow and childless. In Isaiah 49:8, the day is referenced as a day of salvation: it is in the context of Yahweh's redeemer redeeming Judah and all the 'kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down' (v.7). Within verse 9, the day is also linked with the restoration of the land, the motif once again being used for salvation rather than judgment. In 52:6, the day refers to a time when God's people will know his name, when they will respond to the good news that Yahweh has returned to Zion (v.8) alluding to both salvation and restoration. In Isaiah 61:2 the construct 'day of vengeance' is paired in parallel to the Day of the Lord's favour. The one on whom the Spirit rests in verse 1 will bring about this day, which Blenkinsopp acknowledges as an 'aspect' of the Day of the Lord.⁵⁸ Webb notes this passage's focus is on God's favour with the identification of the Messiah in chapters 1-35 and the Suffering Servant being the same person.⁵⁹ Linking the theme of judgment and favour with a person to

⁵⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A new translation with introduction and commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 225.

⁵⁹ Webb, *Isaiah*, 233-34. cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 221.

(Blenkinsopp only holds that the referent is a servant of Yahweh,

come who will bring salvation and restoration is a unique move of Isaiah, for the motif is not only linked with Yahweh. This is key as we look at the New Testament, for Jesus clearly identifies this passage with himself in Luke 4:18ff and Paul associates the coming day, not with Yahweh explicitly, but with Jesus, the Messiah.

The Day of the Lord in Isaiah then, refers to a local judgment on Babylon (13; 47:9) but also is once again linked with an eschatological judgment which is universal in referent (2:6-17; 13:6; 34) where those full of pride will be brought low and Yahweh exalted (2:17). The Day of the Lord also is theophanic in character (2:17) with Yahweh the judge and King executing judgment. Additionally, the day will provide salvation (4:2; 49:8) with the image of the branch being developed through Isaiah (4:2-6; 11:10-11) and looks forward to a future restoration of God's people (11:10). Isaiah gives the first indication that the Branch and the Day of the Lord will be brought together in further revelation laying a framework for Paul (11:10). The metaphor of labour (13:7) is introduced to highlight the pain that the

rather than also Messiah, which is necessary for his position as he holds that Isaiah 1-39 was written by a different author than Isaiah 61).

judgment will bring and not the timing of the event, while the timing of the event is clearly imminent (13:9).

5.2.4 Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel employs the Day of the Lord motif explicitly two times in 13:5 and 30:3. However, von Rad considers the reference to ‘the Day of the Lord’s wrath’ in 7:19 as relating to the day and so this will be included as a primary text.⁶⁰

The book of Ezekiel reflects the main themes of the Day of the Lord developed so far, namely judgment and salvation, seen in the composition of the book where chapters 1-24 are oracles of judgment and 33-48 are oracles of hope.⁶¹ Authorship in part of the work can be attributed to Ezekiel, while much of the organisation and overall structure of the work is attributed to editors who redacted the work.⁶² Block sees the possibility of Ezekiel taking part in this redacting work and acknowledges, however, that this is hard to demonstrate, and that even if he did not, the school of editors who redacted his work did so in the tradition of his

⁶⁰ von Rad, "Day of Yahweh," 98.

⁶¹ Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (28; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), xxv.

⁶² Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48* (29; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), xxv-xxvi.

oracles and prophecies.⁶³ In light of this, we can treat the book of Ezekiel as one unit and examine the motif of the Day of the Lord through the book.

The Day of the Lord is alluded to strongly in chapter 7, with the construct **ביום** **עברת יהוה** (Day of the Lord's wrath) occurring in 7:19. This chapter is about the final judgment on Judah for their sin against Yahweh, and in verses 10-27 Block notes, 'references to the end have become specific predictions of the Day of the Lord' and that 7:1-17 has 'been heavily influenced by previous prophetic oracles concerning the "day of Yahweh."' ⁶⁴ Greenberg also draws a relationship with Amos saying it is an elaboration of Amos 8:1-3.⁶⁵ The day of Yahweh is defined by Block as the day that Yahweh intervenes in history and comes to meet his people, but in the tradition of Amos, it is not something that is going to bring peace and security.⁶⁶ Ezekiel highlights the imminence of the day of Yahweh's coming. This is made clear in verses 2-3: 'the end! The end has come' and the 'end is now upon you'. The repetition of the phrase 'the end! The end has come' highlights

⁶³ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 22.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 243-44.

⁶⁵ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20: a new introduction and commentary* (vol. 22; United States of America: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 160.

⁶⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 245-46; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 157.

the event's nearness.⁶⁷ The end is clearly speaking about the day of God's judgment on Judah, but its referent is the exile of God's people from Judah rather than the eschatological day of God's judgment. However, the nature of judgment is total, none of the people will be left (v.11), it is a decision that will not be reversed (v.13), their lives will not be preserved (v.13) and each person will die for their own sins (v.16). Yahweh has made his decision to visit his people in wrath and remove them from the land they possess, and now all the people can do is wait for his imminent coming. It is worth noting that the focus in this passage, however, is not on Yahweh coming, but rather the disastrous effects on the community of Israel when he comes.⁶⁸

A further reference is made to the Day of the Lord in 13:5. In context, it concerns an oracle addressed to the false prophets of Israel that are ignoring Ezekiel's prophecy and so are ignoring the coming Day of the Lord.⁶⁹ They have not repaired the breaches in the wall of Israel so that it would be able to stand firm in battle on the Day of the Lord. Rather it is going to become an unprotected city

⁶⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 249.

⁶⁸ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 107; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 157-58.

⁶⁹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 241.

under siege. This is one rhetorical device employed by Ezekiel to highlight the failure of the prophets in their prophetic role.

In 30:3 Ezekiel once again employs the motif ‘the Day of the Lord’ to speak of judgment, but this time the judgment is not directed at Judah but towards the nation of Egypt.⁷⁰ Similar concepts are used as in chapter 7, where the Day of the Lord is near (v.3). Ezekiel speaks of this day as a day of clouds, alluding to Joel’s description of the Day of the Lord, and a time of doom for the nations.⁷¹ The scope of the judgment is against Egypt, the oracle’s primary focus, and its allies. As Allen notes, Yahweh’s intervention in Ezekiel is linked with ‘motifs of theophany, attendant storm and “cloud”’ which is applied to Egypt.⁷² The result of the judgment is complete destruction with the result that Egypt will know Yahweh is God (vv.8, 19). In chapter 29, this same event of Egypt’s destruction is referenced with the result that Israel will know Yahweh is God. Here also, the Day of the Lord does not detail explicitly the eschatological judgment when Yahweh comes.

⁷⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: a new translation with introduction and commentary* (vol. 22A; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 620.

⁷¹ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 158.

⁷² Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 115.

Beginning in Ezekiel 34:12, the Day of the Lord motif is alluded to with respect to a wider, more complete judgment upon the nations.⁷³ In that day, Yahweh, the good shepherd is going to rescue his sheep that were scattered. The theme of salvation in this instance occurs only after the judgment has come. In 36:33 the phrase ביום טהרי (on that day) refers not to a day of judgment, but to a day of salvation when Yahweh will cleanse his people from their sin. The Day of the Lord, therefore, is not only a day of judgment but also of salvation.

Finally, the Day of the Lord in Ezekiel refers to an eschatological judgment in chapter 38:10, 14 and 18 where Yahweh sets himself against Gog of Magog. ‘Gog’ (v.1) has a disputed meaning but most likely derives from a powerful king of Lydia, while Meshech and Tubal (v.1) were nations in the northeast of Asia Minor with relations to Assyria, powerful nations from the North.⁷⁴ These nations from the North were, for the Israelites, shrouded in mystery and brutality and thus made ‘Gog and his confederates perfect symbols of the archetypal enemy,’ who sets himself up against God and his people.⁷⁵ The function of chapters 38 and 39 is to show God’s people that God himself will defeat even the most powerful enemies

⁷³ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 700.

⁷⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 434; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 204.

⁷⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 436.

to ensure his people live at peace.⁷⁶ Gog with his armies and his allies comes against God's people (vv.15-16) and God will judge them. The judgment employs eschatological images, such as earthquakes (v.19), mountains being overturned, cliffs crumbling and everyone trembling before Yahweh (v.20). The result is Yahweh's glorious victory and the world knowing that the God of Israel is Yahweh. Yahweh will make himself known, and his people will be forever safe in the land.

Ezekiel uses the motif of the Day of the Lord to refer to judgment and salvation. There is the local judgment of Israel into Babylonian exile (7:2-3) and the eschatological judgment on the nations (34:12; ch. 38-39). This day is imminent (7:2-3), will be final (7:11) and should be expected by Israel (7:2-3), by Judah (7:13, 16) and finally by Gog (38:10, 14, 18). It is a day of disastrous consequences for those who are judged (7:13-16). Further this day of the judgment is linked with theophany and Yahweh's intervention (30:1-26) with the purpose that the Lord would be known among his people (29:21). It is also a day of salvation when Yahweh, through judgment, will cleanse his people from sin and rescue them (36:33).

⁷⁶ Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel* (ed. Motyer; Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 317.

5.2.5 Malachi

Malachi is not a traditional text to study when seeking to understand the Old Testament's use of this motif, with many scholars focusing on the earlier texts to understand the motif.⁷⁷ However, when seeking to understand Paul's view of the motif, Malachi creates a late expectation that God is going to bring the Day of the Lord and so it is important that the motif within this book is studied.

The author of Malachi is identified in 1:1 and can either be a proper name designating the name of the prophet or a generic term as Malachi means 'my messenger.'⁷⁸ Like Ezekiel, the prophecy has been redacted and put in a final form

⁷⁷ For studies that include Malachi see Mayhue, "The Bible's watchword: day of the Lord," 76-77; Boda and McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament prophets*, 141.

⁷⁸ Douglas Stuart, "Malachi," in *The Minor Prophets: an exegetical and expository commentary* (ed. McComiskey; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 1245; Pieter Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 156 Veorhoff lists both the arguments for interpreting Malachi as a title or a proper name, concluding that due to lack of compelling arguments for it being a title it is logical to accept that the prophet was called Malachi; For alternate view cf. John Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 9; William Dumbrell, "Malachi and the Ezra-Nehemiah reforms," *Reformed Theological Review* 35(1976): 43.

which is the canonical book of Malachi. The setting of the book is post-exilic at a similar time to Ezra and Nehemiah, if not slightly before. Malachi is primarily 6 disputations: 1:2-5, 1:6-2:9, 2:10-16, 2:17-3:5, 3:6-12, and 3:13-4:3 with a postscript and conclusion. The Day of the Lord references are in 3:2, 17 and 4:1, 3 and 5 spanning only two of the six disputations.⁷⁹

The first reference in 3:2 is only a partial reference, and many commentators do not explicitly link it with the Day of the Lord motif.⁸⁰ However, the language ימי מכלכל את־יָוֶם בּוֹאוֹ (but who can endure the day of his coming?) in the context of judgment lends itself to the Day of the Lord motif in the same way we have seen in Amos, Joel, Isaiah and Ezekiel.⁸¹ The imagery of not being able to endure this day of judgment is familiar. What is unfamiliar is that it is linked with the messenger of the covenant who is mentioned in verse 1. This messenger comes after one who Yahweh sends. There is lack of clarity about who the messenger of

⁷⁹ Stuart, "Malachi," 1247-49.

⁸⁰ cf. Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zephaniah, and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (vol. 28; Downers Grove Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 263-67; Ralph Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (vol. 32; Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1984), 325-31; 'Day of the Lord', Boda and McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament prophets*, 141.

⁸¹ Stuart does link this verse with the day of the Lord motif, see. Stuart, "Malachi," 1350.

the covenant is or even which covenant it is referring to. In this pericope, the messenger of the covenant is the refiner of God's people (vv.3-4) but it is still Yahweh who will judge (v.5).

The disputation 3:13-4:3 is the final disputation in Malachi and continues to point to one who is to come. Within this disputation, the theme of the Day of the Lord features prominently with the phrase 'on the day', with reference to the Day of the Lord's coming. The disputation is both a warning and comfort, for in 3:17 Yahweh promises to show compassion to those who fear the Lord and honour his name. But it is also quite clearly a warning, for in 4:1, on the day that Yahweh acts, judgment will come for those who do not fear him. The motif is used to refer to judgment between the righteous and the wicked.⁸² There is a strong link between this day and Yahweh's coming. The focus on Elijah as the messenger who comes before the coming of the day of Yahweh in verse 5 before that day, is picked up in the New Testament (Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:11). This, like Isaiah, begins to form the idea that the messenger will bring the Day of the Lord, but it does not complete the idea.

⁸² 'Day of the Lord', Boda and McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament prophets*, 141.

The Day of the Lord in Malachi is day of Judgment (3:2) that no one will endure (3:2). This judgement is explicitly linked with the messenger of the covenant (3:1) who will come and refine God's people (3:3-4) while Yahweh judges (3:5). The day is a warning (4:1), but also a comfort, for those who fear the Lord will be spared (3:17) on the day he comes. The messenger who will come before Yahweh is called Elijah (4:5) and he will be a forerunner to the Day of the Lord.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures, is a motif that is employed by the latter prophets to warn Israel that God is still active and that he is going to come once more and act definitively in our world. The following observations can be made:

First it refers to judgment. This judgment can refer to local judgment upon God's people or the neighbouring nations (Amos 3:14; 5:18; 6:3; 8:9; Joel 1:16-20; Isaiah 13:1-22; 49:9; Ezekiel 7:2-3; Malachi 3:2) but more often takes on an eschatological expectation of an overarching judgment which will encompass all the nations (Joel 2:1-11; Isaiah 13:1-22; 2:6-17; 13:6, 34). As an eschatological judgment, it will be complete and leave no survivors in its wake and no one will

escape (Joel 2:11) as Yahweh avenges the unrighteousness. This it is not something to look forward to for those who find themselves on the wrong side of God's judgment (Amos 5:18). Imagery that is used to describe this day is vivid and includes darkness, trouble, gloom, trembling, Yahweh coming in fire and labour pains (Amos 5:18-20; Joel 2:2-3). This judgment also does not discriminate between God's people Israel and the other nations (Isaiah 2:17).

Second, this judgment is always imminent. There is an urgency in the proclamation of the Day of the Lord for it could come at any time (Joel 1:15; Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:2-3). This requires that a right response be made to the proclamation of the Day of the Lord, for to be caught up in judgment will be a fearful and painful experience (Amos 2:16; Isaiah 13:7). The imagery of labour pains does not emphasise the imminence, but rather the pain and anguish it will cause (Isaiah 13:7).

Third, the Day of the Lord brings salvation. This salvation is given to those who heed the message of Yahweh coming in judgment and turn back to him (Amos 9:11; Joel 1:13-14; Isaiah 4:2; 49:8). Salvation is linked with the promises of restoration (Amos 9:11; Joel 2:28-32). The salvation, will come as the result of passing through judgment, but is an escape from the eschatological judgment of

Yahweh to come (Joel 2:12-17). It is necessary to turn back to Yahweh to avoid the final eschatological judgment that is coming (Amos 9:11; Joel 2:12-17).

Fourth, the Day of the Lord is the day of Yahweh's vindication. The righteous will be shown to be right and the wicked will be destroyed in judgment (Joel 3:1; Isaiah 2:17). On that day, it will be clear that God is righteous and in control of the nations and that he calls sin to account (Joel 2:28; Isaiah 2:17). Unfaithfulness, unrighteousness and pride will be laid bare before Yahweh (Joel 1:6; 3:1, 14), while those who trust Yahweh will be saved and Yahweh will be known through all the nations as Yahweh (Ezekiel 29). This knowledge is to bring comfort to those who fear the Lord (Malachi 3:17).

Fifth, the Day of the Lord is the day that Yahweh comes to earth and reveals himself to all the world (Amos 8:3, 9; Joel 3:1; Isaiah 2:17). This coming is theophanic in character (Isaiah 2:17), a commander coming for battle which is announced by trumpet (Joel 2:1). It will be a battle initiated by Yahweh and executed by Yahweh as he reveals his righteousness in judgment and in salvation (Joel 2:2-3, 6).

Sixth, while not conclusive in the Jewish Scriptures, there are hints that Yahweh's coming and bringing of the Day of the Lord could happen through his suffering servant and the messenger to come. Amos speaks of day of restoration in term of the Davidic King (Amos 9:11), Isaiah develops in conjunction with the Day of the Lord imagery of the branch of David (Isaiah 4:2-6; 11:10-11), and Malachi develops the idea of a messenger Elijah who is to come before the Day of the Lord (4:5). This, when combined with the concept of the coming Messiah which was hoped for by Israel, allowed for the possibility of combining the Day of the Lord motif with the coming Messiah in the Lord Jesus.

This chapter has provided a background for how Paul would have understood the Day of the Lord. It has identified the purpose for which the Day of the Lord was employed in the Jewish Scriptures and identified the different concepts and imagery associated with this Day. The Day of the Lord concept is a flexible term and is easily applied in different contexts to communicate that Yahweh will act decisively in judgment and bring about salvation. This is a likely reason that the motif is adopted and used by many of the latter prophets as they communicate God's words to their hearers. A new finding is the conclusion that the Day of the Lord could be fulfilled by Yahweh through his suffering servant and the messenger to come. This may explain Paul's use of the motif and his appropriating

it to Jesus rather than Yahweh, this thesis will be examined in the exegesis in part three.

Part 3

Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians
with a focus on
Paul's use of the Day of the Lord motif

6 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The previous chapter surveyed the Old Testament use of the Day of the Lord motif drawing some conclusions about how Paul could have understood the motif from his Jewish perspective. This chapter seeks to build on these conclusions and see if Paul's understanding of the motif has developed and changed in light of his now being an apostle of Christ. The way that this will be assessed is to explore how Paul uses the motif in the context of his communication with the Thessalonians. Two passages have been selected for this study, 4:13-18 and 5:1-11. Although 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 are being treated as different pericopes, the exegesis will show they are strongly related, so while our methodology with the Old Testament text

was to start with explicit reference to the motif, this study will start with 4:13-18 as it provides the literary context to 5:1-11. This avoids the pitfall, identified in the literature review, of treating 5:1-11 in isolation from its context.

Furthermore, as the motif is only explicitly mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 4, 4:13-18 will be explored for the possibility that undergirding the references to the Parousia is the motif of the coming Day of the Lord. The literature review identified the assumption that Parousia and Day of the Lord are interchangeable but that this needs to be tested. Aernie has provided a similar type of study of the Day of the Lord and forensic language in 2 Thessalonians 1, demonstrating how undergirding the judicial language is the final judgment of the Day of the Lord.¹ As observed in the literature review, the conclusions Aernie makes concerning 2 Thessalonians 1 cannot simply be applied to 1 Thessalonians as the language of 1 Thessalonians is not primarily forensic language.² In the exegesis that follows, one of the questions that will be asked is ‘does the Day of the Lord motif undergird this eschatological text that concerns the Parousia?’ This will be assessed with reference to the chapter Day of the Lord in Jewish Scriptures.

¹ Aernie, *Day of the Lord motif in 2 Thessalonians*.

² Karl Donfried and Howard Marshall, *The theology of the shorter Pauline letters* (ed. Dunn; Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 66.

The following method, as stated in the preliminary issues, focuses on the Greek text of 1 Thessalonians and provides exegesis of the text so that any observations and conclusions can be shown to be drawn from 1 Thessalonians. For each passage both context and structure for the pericope will be studied before interpreting the text and drawing some conclusions.

6.1 Context

First Thessalonians 4:13-18 forms part of the paraenetic section of 1 Thessalonians 4 beginning with *Λοιπὸν οὖν* (finally brothers) in 4:1.³ In this section Paul has exhorted the Thessalonians to sanctification by abstaining from sexual immorality, to love each other and be productive in the church and wider community (vv. 3-12). Paul now addresses the need for believers to encourage one another considering the hope that the dead in Christ have.

Some commentators consider that Paul has moved from paraenetic exhortation to answering some of the theological questions the Thessalonians have. Green, for

³ Eugene Boring, *I & II Thessalonians: a commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 134; Weima, *I-2 Thessalonians*, 254.

instance, sees the answer to the first question being in verses 9-12, and verse 13 marks the response to the second question.⁴ Evidence for this view is based on Paul's use of *περὶ δέ* (now concerning) in 4:9, 13 and 5:1, which Paul in other epistles (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1) used to introduce an answer to a question.⁵ However, in the case of the Thessalonians, there is not enough supporting evidence to draw this conclusion. This view lacks explanatory power given the context and content of the pericope, for Paul is not simply answering questions but he writes to persuade the Thessalonians to live in a certain way. Weima views this pericope as paraenetic, for Paul is expounding the transitory prayer of 3:12-13, with Paul seeking to 'complete the things lacking' in the Thessalonians' faith. Weima writes regarding 4:13-18, 'this section on the surface appears didactic, but it is teaching with the purpose to change the behaviour of the Thessalonians.'⁶ What is lacking in the Thessalonians faith? It is the hope which should accompany the teaching concerning death of Christian brothers and sisters.⁷ It is this hope which should inform the Thessalonian practice. Holmstrad agrees when he writes that 4:13 is 'moving from exhortation to information, although it turns out that

⁴ Gene Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Apollos, 2002), 213.

⁵ Ibid., 202.

⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 303.

⁷ Karl Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and early Christianity* (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 40.

this is not the whole story’ noting that the pericope ends with exhortation making it clear the whole section is paraenetic in purpose.⁸ Considering this, 4:13-18 should be read as further paraenetic material.

6.2 Structure

Verse 13 begins by clearly demarcating this section from the one previous. Three markers are employed by Paul to this end: the use of ‘I do not want you to be unknowing’, the vocative ‘brothers’ and the use of reversed *περὶ δέ* formula (see diagrammed text below). In conjunction with these syntactical markers there is also a change in the content of the pericope from living a life of love for each other (4:9) and winning the respect of outsiders (4:12) to speaking of the need to not mourn without hope those who have died in Christ.⁹

12 ἵνα περιπατῇτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω
καὶ μηδενὸς χρείαν ἔχητε.

13 Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν,
ἀδελφοί,

⁸ Jonas Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul* (vol. 28; Gotab, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1997), 64.

⁹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 304.

περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων,

ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.

The structure of the pericope itself raises two important exegetical and interpretive questions. The first asks whether verse 15 is further clarifying verse 14. Verse 14 begins with the coordinating conjunction γάρ (for), giving a reason for the prohibition ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε (in order that you might not grieve) in verse 13. The question is whether the coordinating conjunction γάρ (for) in verse 15 is epexegetical, further clarifying the reason given in verse 14 or whether it substitutes another reason for not grieving pointing back to verse 13. Luckensmeyer, Malherbe and Holmstrand argue for the former, both resting their evidence on the function of the word γάρ, holding that verse 15 further explains those who are asleep being with Christ (v14).¹⁰ Syntactically this view has strength, as shown by studies in discourse analysis. Runge, for instance, concludes that, ‘Γάρ introduces explanatory material that strengthens or supports what precedes’ and that it signals ‘close continuity with what precedes.’¹¹ This,

¹⁰ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 177; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 267; Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul*, 64.

¹¹ Steven Runge, *Discourse grammar of the Greek New Testament : a practical introduction for teaching and exegesis* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers 2010), 52-54.

however, does not restrict verse 15 from referring to verse 13 as there is still close proximity between the verses and no conjunction to indicate the argument has moved forward. Weima, for instance, views the γάρ in verse 14 and 15 as parallel, both referring to verse 13, hence verse 15 provides a second reason for the prohibition in verse 13.¹² Given this disagreement and the syntax being able to support both views, the content of the verses themselves need to be taken into consideration.

There is a link between the idea of being σὺν αὐτῷ (with him) in both verses but with different aspects being addressed. Verse 14 addresses the Christological reason for being σὺν αὐτῷ (with him), while verse 15 considers the timing of the event in relation to οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι (those who remain alive). This supports the view that verses 14 and 15 give two parallel reasons why the Thessalonians should not grieve.

A second structural issue on which there is debate, is what verses constitute ‘the word of the Lord’ in verse 15. Boring lists the possible options, 1) a minority of scholars read the neuter pronoun οὗτος in verse 15 as an antecedent referent to

¹² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 220.

what Paul has previously said in v14.¹³ 2) Reading οὗτος as a postcedent referent, it is possible that 15b-17 is the 'word of the Lord'. In this view the second ὅτι in verse 16 is causal. Arguments against this view are as Boring notes, the risen Christ would not say 'we' in verses 15 and 17 and would not use the term 'in Christ' of himself. 3) The third view is that the 'word of the Lord' begins in verse 16 and ends at 17a. In this view verse 15 provides Paul's summary of the word of the Lord before the ὅτι in verse 16 'introduces the quotation and provides the basis for the preceding statement' providing a new stage in Paul's argument.¹⁴ Weima and Malherbe agree that the word of the Lord is located in verses 16-17 based on unique literary features that are not typically Pauline and have parallels found in the gospel.¹⁵ In the following discussion it will be assumed that v16-17b constitute 'the word of the Lord'.

The pericope ends at the end of verse 18 with ὥστε summing up the behaviour the Thessalonians ought to practice in light of Paul's teaching. This is further

¹³ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 165; cf. for οὗτος being an antecedent referent cf. Richard and Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 226.

¹⁴ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 166. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 268.

¹⁵ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 267; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 325; cf. Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 166. Luckensmeyer and Green in their exegesis of this section do not delineate which verses are a 'word of the Lord' and which are not.

confirmed in 5:1 by Paul's use of *περὶ δέ*, the appeal to *ἀδελφοί* and the stating of how Paul does not need to write to the Thessalonians. While there are similarities in both structure and content between 4:13-18 and 5:1-11, it is generally agreed that they are two separate pericopes.¹⁶

¹⁶ See exegesis on 5:1-11 for further detail.

6.3 *Greek Text Flow Diagram*

- 13 Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν,
ἀδελφοί,
περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων,
ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε
καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.
- 14 εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν
ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη,
οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας
διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἄξει σὺν αὐτῷ.
- 15 Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου,
ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι
εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου
οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας·
- 16 ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος
ἐν κελεύσματι,
ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου
καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ,
καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ
καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,
- 17 ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι
ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀρπαγησόμεθα
ἐν νεφέλαις
εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα·
καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα.
- 18 Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

6.4 Exegesis

6.4.1 Verse 13

Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα.

Verse 13 introduces the topic of the pericope, namely that the Thessalonians should not grieve those who have fallen asleep. It is introduced by use of three transitional markers (see structure above) and expresses Paul's desire that the Thessalonians not be ἀγνοεῖν (unknowing) concerning this matter. Luckensmeyer, Green and Malherbe agree that Paul is expounding on an already introduced theme that the Thessalonians need reminding of.¹⁷ This view assumes that the Thessalonians have a hopeful eschatological optimism. Whereas Wiema, based on Paul's use of the statements 'you know' and 'you remember' which are used throughout the letter and are absent from this pericope, suggests it is new material.¹⁸ Nicholls agrees that Paul uses these to demarcate knowing and unknowing, and thus the unknowing refers to a new teaching.¹⁹ While this latter

¹⁷ Green, *Thessalonians*, 213; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 213; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 262.

¹⁸ Wiema, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 307.

¹⁹ Colin Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 21.

view is possible, given the weight of eschatological teaching so far in the context of the epistle, more likely Paul is reminding them of something he has already taught but may not have been applied to their grieving.

The topic is introduced by περί and expressed with a present substantive participle τῶν κοιμωμένων (those who are asleep).²⁰ Paul only uses this term about those who have died and it was a common euphemism for death being ‘natural and widespread’ in the Jewish world.²¹ In context it refers to those who have died as Christians. The broader topical context in the pericope is referring to a general resurrection, which has lead Nicholls to suggest that resurrection is implied in Paul’s use of the word κοιμωμένων.²² This view is supported by the fact that the topic being addressed is the general resurrection of believers to be with Jesus.

²⁰ Later manuscripts (D, F, G, K, L, Ψ) suggest the possibility of κοιμωμένων being perfect, however, the weight of evidence from earlier manuscripts (Ⲙ, A, B) and the harder reading is to read the present tense-form. cf. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 263; Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 564-65.

²¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 308; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 263.

²² Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 22.

The ἵνα purpose clause, indicates why Paul is addressing the topic of those who have died. The purpose is stated with a negative subjunctive μὴ λυπῆσθε (so that you would not grieve) in the present tense to highlight the ongoing nature of the grief.²³ It is a command designed to change the behaviour of the Thessalonians. The question this verse raises, and what Luckensmeyer calls the ‘crux interpretum’ for this pericope, is why are the Thessalonians grieving so intensely for the deceased that Paul needed to address it?²⁴

Many hypotheses have been put forward as to what caused the grief.²⁵ Weima suggests the Thessalonians are confused about how one eschatological event, that is the resurrection of deceased believers, coordinates with the future event of Christ’s Parousia and those who are alive. This confusion then led to the belief that the dead believers would be at a disadvantage at this great event.²⁶ Evidence for this view is taken from the text: 1) Verse 15 has the strongest possible negation concerning those alive preceding the dead; 2) Paul orders the eschatological events in a way where deceased believers are raised first; and 3) Emphasis of the

²³ For example of present aspect allowing for ongoing or 'progressive' action cf. Constantine Campbell, *The Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 63.

²⁴ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 213.

²⁵ For a list of hypotheses cf. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 310.

²⁶ Ibid.; cf. Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 159.

equality of deceased believers with those who are alive in verse 17. An objection to this view is that if the Thessalonians believed in resurrection, why are they grieving? Nicholls states that 'Paul has apparently omitted a step in his argumentation, and that step seems to be the resurrection of the saints and their ascending to meet Christ.'²⁷ However, this objection 'underestimates the anticipation and hope that the Thessalonians have about participating in the glory of the Parousia' (1 Thessalonians 1:10).²⁸ The issue, therefore, is not about a belief in the general resurrection but a concern that those who have died in Christ will miss out on the glorious event of the Parousia. A third view by Garrow, suggests there was confusion about martyrs who are already in the air with Christ and those who were not martyred and not in the air and Paul is clarifying the application of his teaching.²⁹ This view is based on an interpretation of the book of Revelation and finds no support within 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 itself. It is best to see the grieving as resulting from the confusion regarding when the dead in Christ and those who are alive will be taken to be with Christ.

²⁷ Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 34.

²⁸ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 313.

²⁹ Alan Garrow, "The eschatological tradition behind 1 Thessalonians: Didache 16," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32, no. 2 (2009): 201.

The nature of grieving is made clear by the comparative καθώς drawing a comparison between how the Thessalonians ought to grieve and οἱ λοιποὶ (the rest). The comparison made is one of degree: rather than prohibiting any grief, Paul is prohibiting grief concerning the specific issue he is addressing, namely grief about the dead being at a disadvantage at the event of the Parousia. The phrase οἱ λοιποὶ has no antecedent in 1 Thessalonians, the antecedent is only made clear by the nominative appositional comment that makes it clear ‘the rest’ are οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα (those who have no hope).³⁰ In Greco-Roman society, while there was belief in an immortal soul, there was little hope and expectation for life after death.³¹ If there is nothing beyond death there is good reason to grieve, but the hope that Paul speaks of is the hope spelt out in the following verses where the reasons the Thessalonians should not grieve is given. Considering this, ‘the rest who are without hope’ refer to those without the Christian hope.³² The Christian hope in 4:13-18 is the hope of deceased believers sharing in the glory of Christ’s Parousia with those who are alive.

³⁰ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 216.

³¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 314.

³² Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*.

6.4.2 Verse 14

εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἀνέστη, οὕτως καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἁξεί σὺν αὐτῷ.

Verse 14, introduced by γὰρ gives the first reason that the Thessalonians should not grieve. The verse opens with a first class condition of fact: εἰ γὰρ πιστεύομεν (for if we believe), which refers to an already established belief. The use of the present tense-form first person plural πιστεύομεν (we believe) indicates that it is Paul, his companions Silas and Timothy, and the Thessalonians who currently hold to this belief.³³ The ὅτι introduces a subordinating clause that introduces the content of the currently held beliefs. Malherbe suggests it is an independent formulation of Paul's but does not give evidence for this view.³⁴ Weima, however, does put forward evidence for the view of this statement being creedal, not independently Pauline, suggesting: 1) The statement 'we believe' introduces a creedal formula (cf. Romans 10:9); 2) Use of the term 'Jesus' alone is rare for Paul; 3) Paul uses the rare ἀνίστημι rather than the more common ἐγείρω to refer to the resurrection; 4) Elsewhere Paul refers to God's activity in raising Jesus but

³³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 219; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 265.

³⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 265.

here the reference is to Jesus rising; and 5) Paul's 'sheer economy' of words.³⁵

The use of the creedal formula has the effect of not only including Paul and the Thessalonians but also the broader Christian church.

The content of the creed is that Ἰησοῦς ἀπέθανεν (Jesus died), and was ἀνέστη (raised). Its purpose within the pericope is it links the future events which Paul speaks of with the person and work of Jesus. Luckensmeyer also suggests that Paul is using this formula to show that Jesus is Lord. Even though the word 'Lord' is not expressly mentioned, the creed points forward to the events of Christ's Lordship.³⁶ If this is the case, the Lordship of Christ is linked with the coming of Christ in verse 16 when ὁ κύριος... καταβήσεται ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ (the Lord descends from heaven), which strengthens the possibility that Paul does have the Day of the Lord motif in mind as he writes this pericope.

The following clause, introduced by οὕτως, provides the apodosis to the first class condition introduced at the beginning of the verse. Commentators note the apodosis is an ellipsis where, as Weima notes, 'we also believe that' while not

³⁵ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 316-17; cf. Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 161.

³⁶ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 220.

mentioned is implied.³⁷ This ellipsis highlights the integral relationship between Jesus' death and resurrection and those of the deceased believers who will also be raised. This is made clear by οὕτως and the ascensive καί which introduces the corollary belief regarding how God will also raise the dead.

The subject of the verb ἔξει (will bring) is θεός (God), while the aorist passive substantive participle κοιμηθέντας (those who are asleep) indicates who God is acting upon. The idea of being 'asleep' would have been understood in the first century as a euphemism for death. The point Paul is making is that to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is to believe also in the resurrection of the deceased. The prepositional phrase διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ could either refer to those who are asleep or to the verb ἔξει (will bring). If the former, it reinforces the belief that it is those in Christ who are asleep that Paul refers to.³⁸ More likely the latter is on view and it refers to the action of the verb, bring, which makes better sense of the preposition διὰ.³⁹ God is going to bring believers to be with Christ. On a surface reading this

³⁷ Ibid., 221; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 265. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 318.

³⁸ For comprehensive list of arguments for this position cf. Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 27-28.

³⁹ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 222-23; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 191.

would appear to mitigate the thesis that Paul is referring to coming day of Yahweh in this pericope, for the believers are being bought up to be with him. However when the verse is read with the parallel reason provided by the word of the Lord in verse 15, the timing of this event is concurrent with the Lord's descending. The final words σὺν αὐτῷ (with him) give the purpose of the bringing, it is to be with Jesus.

Thus the first reason that the Thessalonians should not grieve is that God will resurrect the deceased believers to be with Jesus.⁴⁰

6.4.3 Verse 15

Τοῦτο γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι εἰς τὴν παρουσίαν τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν τοὺς κοιμηθέντας·

Verse 15 is introduced by the co-ordinating conjunction gar (γάρ), indicating this is Paul's second reason that the Thessalonians should not grieve. Paul now addresses the issue of the events of Christ's return with respect to those who are

⁴⁰ See also Nicholl, *From hope to despair in Thessalonica : situating 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 28.

still living. The demonstrative τοῦτο is cataphoric, looking forward to the following summary sentence indicated by ὅτι.⁴¹

6.4.3.1 The Word of the Lord

The phrase ὑμῖν λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου (we speak to you in the word of the Lord) is enigmatic. Weima identifies three questions that need to be answered: 1) What constitutes the word of the Lord; 2) What is the source of the word of the Lord; and 3) Why does Paul cite this word of the Lord?⁴² The term κυρίου is a referent to Jesus, which is clear from the word's use in 1:3; 2:15, 19; 3:11, 13; 4:1-2; 5:9, 23, 28.

What constitutes the word of the Lord starts at verse 16. The source of this word is unknown, as Luckensmeyer notes, 'the sources of λόγοι κυρίου are diverse and often difficult to identify in particular instances.'⁴³ There are five potential sources or authorities of which Luckensmeyer lists three.⁴⁴ The first is that it is an agraphon, a saying of Jesus that has not been preserved.⁴⁵ The second is that Paul

⁴¹ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 267; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 320.

⁴² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 320.

⁴³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 187.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 187-88.

⁴⁵ Dale Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The pattern of parallels," *New Testament Studies* 28(1982): 17.

is making a reference to a known written source of Jesus, such as the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:29-33).⁴⁶ The third is that Paul has received this word in the tradition of an Old Testament prophet, where the exalted Jesus has revealed this word directly to Paul.⁴⁷ Fourth, as Pahl concludes, the word of the Lord refers to the authoritative gospel of Jesus dying and rising again.⁴⁸ Fifth, the word of the Lord is an expression of early Christian prophecy.⁴⁹ The issue underlying which to choose is that none of the possibilities can be definitively ruled out. Luckensmeyer highlights that a decision 'is often predicated upon a methodological predilection regarding a minimalist or maximalist inclination of each scholar.'⁵⁰ It is outside the scope of this paper to evaluate each source, but it is worth noting that what one concludes can influence the argument for Paul using the Day of the Lord motif in this pericope. For instance, Blaising who concludes Paul is relying on the Jesus tradition writes, 'These intertextual links are important. Not only do they establish the fact of Paul's dependence on Jesus' expressed teaching, but they also help show what Paul believed was included in

⁴⁶ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture," 261.

⁴⁷ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 190.

⁴⁸ Michael Pahl, *Discerning the 'Word of the Lord': the 'Word of the Lord' in 1 Thessalonians 4:15* (389; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 167.

⁴⁹ Raymond Collins, *Studies on the First letter to the Thessalonians* (66; Leuven: University Press, 1984), 159.

⁵⁰ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 189.

the Day of the Lord.’⁵¹ On the other hand, Luckensmeyer, who cautiously adopts the view that Paul received this word from the exalted Jesus and then paraphrased it to meet the situation of the Thessalonians, reduces the possibility of intertextual links to the Day of the Lord motif.⁵² Firm evidence that 4:13-18 refers to the Day of the Lord therefore cannot be implied by the ‘word of the Lord’ alone as no definite source of this word can be alluded to.

What is the purpose of Paul citing this ‘word of the Lord’? It seems from the pericope it is to change the Thessalonians’ behaviour, in that it provides a reason for them to not grieve. Using the word of the Lord is a strong response to the issue that Paul is addressing and it forcefully brings into focus the reason why the Thessalonians should not be grieving.⁵³

6.4.3.2 Verse 15 continued

The ὅτι in verse 15 provides a summary sentence which acts as an introductory statement for word of the Lord in verse 16.⁵⁴ The statement is introduced with an emphatic ἡμεῖς (we) and is qualified by adjectival substantive participle οἱ ζῶντες

⁵¹ Blaising, "The day of the Lord and the rapture," 261.

⁵² Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 190.

⁵³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 322.

⁵⁴ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 166.

οἱ περιλειπόμενοι (who remain alive), making it clear that there are two groups, those who are asleep and those who are alive.⁵⁵ The preposition εἰς has temporal force, highlighting that those who are alive at the event of the Parousia will not precede those who are asleep. This is emphasised by the strong negation, οὐ μή, in combination with the word φθάσωμεν (come before).⁵⁶ This makes clear to the Thessalonians who are still living that those who are asleep will not miss out. It also functions to draw attention to the seriousness of the situation of the Thessalonians grieving.⁵⁷

6.4.4 Verse 16

ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου καὶ ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ, καταβήσεται ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,

Verse 16 and 17 ‘constitute the most explicit description of the events surrounding Christ’s return found anywhere in Paul’s writing and probably in the whole NT as well’.⁵⁸ Verse 16 begins the word of the Lord with a causal ὅτι and builds the expectation of the Parousia of Christ while at the same time affirming what Paul

⁵⁵ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 227.

⁵⁶ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 273.

⁵⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 323.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 325.

has said in verse 15, namely that those who are alive will not precede those who are asleep.

The subject of the verse is introduced with a reflexive pronoun, αὐτός, which serves to emphasise that it is ὁ κύριος (the Lord) who will be descending. The Lord here once again refers to Jesus. Paul is thus emphasising the divinity of Jesus for the expectation from Jewish scriptures was that Yahweh, the Lord, will descend (Amos 8:3, 9; Joel 3:1; Isaiah 2:17).⁵⁹ This is an instance, of what in Jewish Scripture is attributed to Yahweh, a transference ‘facilitated by the attribution of the Kyrios title to Jesus’ identifying the coming of Yahweh with Christ.⁶⁰ Boring also notes concerning these apocalyptic images that Christians, ‘now understood “the Lord” to be the Lord Jesus.’⁶¹

The following three prepositional phrases all qualify the verb καταβήσεται (will descend) giving some of the circumstances surrounding the Lord’s coming. Luckensmeyer argues the first prepositional phrase ἐν κελεύσματι (with a loud command) introduces a head statement as it does not have a qualifying genitive,

⁵⁹ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 169.

⁶⁰ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), 73.

⁶¹ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 169.

whereas the second ἐν φωνῇ (with the voice) is qualified by the genitive ἀρχαγγέλου (archangel) and the third, ἐν σάλπιγγι (with the trumpet) is coordinated by καί and has the genitive θεοῦ (God).⁶² Further evidence for this view is that the first phrase is substantive, while the latter two are nouns. Taken this way, the latter two statements explain the first. Syntax, however, also allows that all three prepositional phrases can stand in apposition to each other with each preposition introducing a new thought, that is, the latter two phrases do not explain the first, but rather, like the first, make a comment on what will happen when the Lord descends. This is the preferred reading as the contents of each participle phrase is filling out the picture of what will happen when the Lord descends.

In the first phrase, κέλευσμα (command) is a hapax legomena and means the cry of a command given, for example from an officer to his soldiers. In the first century, this word took on the technical meaning as an official decree or order within the political sphere.⁶³ The command is being given by the Lord Jesus, for he is the subject of the verse. Its inclusion here is to highlight the importance of the person giving the command. What the command is referring to is unclear, but

⁶² Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 178; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 274.

⁶³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 327; Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 239; Arndt, et al., "A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature," 538.

context suggests it is referring to those who are asleep and who will rise first as is mentioned at the end of the verse. The idea then is not just that the dead will hear the command, but that they would respond to the command to rise.⁶⁴

The second phrase, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου (with the voice of the archangel), refers to the second circumstance accompanying Jesus return. The voice could be identified as the one giving the command, but given it is parallel to the first and third, this voice is not issuing the command but occurring at the same time. The ἀρχαγγέλου (archangel) here cannot be identified, although some propose that it is the archangel Michael from Daniel 12 and Jude 9.⁶⁵ What is significant is the event the voice of the archangel demarcates: the Parousia of Christ.

The third phrase, ἐν σάλπιγγι θεοῦ (with the trumpet blast of God), has clear links with the apocalyptic imagery used in the Old Testament, particularly that of the Day of the Lord. This is seen in eschatological texts where the sound of the trumpet is associated with God's people worshiping the Lord (Isaiah 27:13), as a warning of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:14-16) and the Lord's appearing (Zechariah 9:14). Weima comments, 'In Judaism the trumpet... did not

⁶⁴ Green, *Thessalonians*, 224.

⁶⁵ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 240; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 327.

function first and foremost as a musical instrument but also as a signal, marking in particular the visible appearance of God not only in the past but also in the future “day of the LORD.”⁶⁶ The trumpet sound in the Jewish Scriptures introduces the Day of the Lord, the day when God will bless and judge his people. Here it announces the Parousia of the Lord Jesus, suggesting the possibility that Paul is using the Day of the Lord motif and the Parousia interchangeably. The threefold combination of the command, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet, coming before the finite verb, ‘descend’, serves to highlight that this event of Jesus’ descent is not an event that can be ignored.

The Lord descends ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ (from heaven) and his location implicitly draws attention to the exaltation of Jesus. The coordinating καί links the descending of the Lord with οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ (the dead in Christ) and introduces the result of the Lord’s descent. The euphemism of sleep is not used, making it clear that we are talking not about those who are spiritually dead, but those who are physically dead.⁶⁷ That the dead are not spiritually dead is made clear by the reference to the dead being ἐν Χριστῷ (in Christ). The result of the Lord’s descent is indicated by the future middle: ἀναστήσονται (will be raised). This does not simply refer to a

⁶⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 328.

⁶⁷ BDAG: 667.

resuscitation of the Thessalonians, ‘but a recreation of the Thessalonian community’ where a new eschatological existence is brought into being.⁶⁸ Luckensmeyer interprets this new eschatological existence as the climax of the new community that is formed as a result of the Thessalonian response to the gospel, where social conflict and now death are overcome.⁶⁹ This underestimates the event. In light of the Day of the Lord motif this event is the climax of the new creation for all humanity, not only for the Thessalonians.

The final word of the verse *πρῶτον* (first), is placed in the last position to emphasize the temporal aspect of the term.⁷⁰ It makes clear that the deceased in Christ will not miss the climatic eschatological event of Christ’s return, but will in fact experience the reality of ‘God’s eschatological triumph’ with those who are still alive.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 251.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 329.

⁷¹ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*.

6.4.5 Verse 17

ἔπειτα ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἄερα· καὶ οὕτως πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα.

Verse 17 continues the word of the Lord which began in verse 16. The sequential marker ἔπειτα marks the next event in the sequence after the Lord descends.⁷² The adjectival substantive participles οἱ ζῶντες οἱ περιλειπόμενοι (those who remain alive) indicates the change in subject from those who are dead, to those who are living. The adverb ἅμα (together) could either mark a simultaneous event with the events described in verse 15 or an association between the deceased believers and those who remain alive. Its close connection with the preposition σὺν, however, means the adverb communicates association, ‘those who are alive together with.’⁷³ Thus the rest of verse 17 refers to an event that deceased believers and those who are alive will both participate in.

⁷² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 330.

⁷³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 253; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 275; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 330.

The event is a meeting with the Lord. The future divine passive, ἀρπαγησόμεθα, means to grab or seize suddenly without resistance and is used to indicate what will happen to living believers when the Lord descends.⁷⁴ The use of this word has received lots of attention in scholarship and it is one of the key verses in arguing for a premillennial understanding of the rapture. Blaising, for instance, interprets ἀρπαγησόμεθα as rapture in his argument for a premillennial understanding of Scripture.⁷⁵ The interpretation ‘rapture’ is unhelpful for it refers to a theological paradigm, namely premillennialism, built around this word that Paul did not intend. The use of ἀρπάζω is a word play where this word was commonly employed to mean snatched away to death, but here is used to mean snatched to meet with Jesus.⁷⁶ This snatching occurs ἐν νεφέλαις (in the clouds). This could refer to the locality of this meeting, but the image of clouds also has allusions to theophany and Christ’s return (Joel 2:2; Ezekiel 7:3; cf. Daniel 7:13-14 where the Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven).⁷⁷ Weima writes,

⁷⁴ BDAG: s.v. ἀρπάζω.

⁷⁵ cf. Craig Blaising, *Three views on the Rapture : pretribulation, prewrath, posttribulation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 27. Further evidence of this verse not referring to theological paradigm of the rapture is that those who are left behind are not those who will not experience the rapture, but will share in the eschatological blessings of Christ with those are now asleep. See Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 171.

⁷⁶ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 276; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 231.

⁷⁷ Green, *Thessalonians*, 226.

the reference to believers being snatched up “by means of clouds,” therefore, says less about the location of this gathering than it does about the presence of God and reassuring Paul’s readers about the active part the Divine will play in ensuring the equal presence and participation of both living and deceased believers in Christ’s Parousia.⁷⁸

The purpose of the snatching is indicated by εἰς, to meet the descending Christ in the air. Of interest is the nature of this meeting. The word ἀπάντησις (meeting), which Paul employs, was used to refer to a Hellenistic tradition of a formal reception where a delegation from a town went out to meet a visiting dignitary and then became the entourage for the dignitary as they entered the town.⁷⁹ Weima notes in the New Testament this word became a *terminus technicus* and in light of this, Wiema, when interpreting this verse, imports its Hellenistic meaning.⁸⁰ Luckensmeyer, however, moves with caution in accepting this conclusion, noting the Hellenistic background is important but cannot be the sole key to interpretation.⁸¹ Malherbe agrees that the word ἀπάντησις is a *terminus technicus*

⁷⁸ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 333.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 334.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 263-65.

but finds it unlikely that this is what is being referred to in this verse. He gives four reasons: 1) Hellenistic processions were instigated at the initiative of the welcomers, here the procession is snatched; 2) The purpose of the meeting is to gather with the Lord and not escort him; 3) Nothing is said about Jesus coming all the way to earth; and 4) Paul is quiet about what will transpire when they meet.⁸²

It is clear that if Paul's intention was to import that Hellenistic meaning of 'meeting', that is those snatched by Jesus becoming Jesus' delegation on his way to earth, he shapes the tradition to his own end and does not use it in the strict sense of the word. Given this, it is not possible from the word 'meeting' alone to import an entire theology of Christ's return. Adopting Luckensmeyer's caution is appropriate in interpreting the nature of this meeting. What is clear is the purpose of the meeting is to meet τοῦ κυρίου (the Lord). This gives confidence to the Thessalonian believers that their deceased brother and sisters have not missed out.

The final part of this verse gives the most comfort, for after the snatching and the meeting, as indicated by connective καί, the believers 'in this way will always be with the Lord.'⁸³ The future indicative, ἐσόμεθα (be with), encodes perfective aspect which means no one has yet missed out on this event for the event of the

⁸² Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 277.

⁸³ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 174.

Parousia is an event to come, an issue Paul addresses in more depth in 5:1-11. The greatest encouragement, however, comes from the word πάντοτε (always) for it qualifies exactly how long the believers will be with Jesus after this event, an eternity.

6.4.6 Verse 18

Ὡστε παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις.

This verse highlights the practical implication of Paul's teaching. Instead of grieving as those who have no hope, they are to encourage each other with Paul's words. The conjunction ὥστε makes this clear by referring directly to Paul's teaching. A further link is made when Paul says παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις (exhort one another with these words).

6.5 Conclusion

One of the defining marks of Paul's eschatology is the coming Parousia of the Lord. This chapter sought to provide the literary context to 5:1-11 as well as investigate whether the Parousia and the Day of the Lord are interchangeable.

When this pericope is aligned with the conclusions from the previous chapter, the Day of the Lord in Jewish Scripture, there does appear to be evidence against the Parousia and the Day of the Lord being interchangeable. First, Jesus does not come down all the way to Earth, in fact the meeting with Jesus is in the air (4:17). The Day of the Lord, as found in the previous chapter, has the expectation of Yahweh coming to Earth to intervene in worldly affairs (Amos 8:3, 9; Joel 3:1; Isaiah 2:17). Second, one of the key themes of the Day of the Lord, namely Yahweh's eschatological judgment (Joel 2:1-11; Isaiah 13:1-22, 2:6-17, 13:6, 34) and his subsequent vindication (Joel 2:28; Isaiah 2:17; Ezekiel 29) is missing in 4:13-18. Third, the concept of the immanence of Christ's return is not mentioned whereas the Day of the Lord in Jewish Scriptures is always imminent (Joel 1:15; Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:2-3). This however does not have the final say for the Day of the Lord is a flexible motif and can be used in different ways.

In support of 4:13-18 referring to the Day of the Lord, first, Jesus is referred to as ὁ κύριος (4:15, 16) which is a reference to Yahweh. The Lord coming down here, is Yahweh coming down. Further the title Χριστός is applied to Jesus, which links with the Old Testament expectations of a royal branch (Isaiah 4:2-6; 11:10-11) and a the divine messenger (Malachi 4:5), which as demonstrated in the previous chapter, are possibly linked with the Day of the Lord. Second, another major

theme of the Day of the Lord is addressed, that of salvation (Amos 9:11; Joel 1:13-14; Isaiah 4:2; 49:8) and restoration (Amos 9:11, Joel 2:28-32). Those who are alive will be caught up with those in the air (4:16), resurrected by the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, even though Jesus is meeting with the believers in the air (4:16), it is a theophanic event where the Lord is revealed to his believers, aligning with expectations of the Day of the Lord (Amos 8:3, 9; Joel 3:1; Isaiah 2:17). Fourth, some imagery used is associated with the Day of the Lord, such as the trumpet command in 4:15 (cf. Joel 2:1). Lastly, it is not clear from this pericope what Jesus actions are after raising the dead in Christ and snatching the believers from the earth to meet with them. It is possible he is going to continue to the descent and bring the judgement and vindication promised by the Day of the Lord.

Malherbe notes a relationship between the Parousia and the Day of the Lord when he writes,

The basic meaning of *parousia* (“coming”) is presence, arrival or coming. It is used in this way by Paul in 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12. In all other places where the word occurs in the NT, it is in the technical, eschatological sense of the coming the LORD, the Day of the Lord, or the Son of Man. It is used by Paul in an eschatological sense

primarily in his Thessalonian letters, of the coming of the Lord ...with a temporal sense “at the Parousia”, “until the Parousia.”⁸⁴

The eschatological sense of Parousia does lend itself to speaking of the eschatological event of the Day of the Lord, but there is not enough evidence in this pericope alone to say that the Parousia is interchangeable with the Day of the Lord. Rather at this point we should agree with Johnson, the ‘Parousia and the Day of the Lord are not simply interchangeable..., the Parousia happens *on*, and is the catalyst for, the Day of the Lord, but it is not equivalent to everything else that happens on that Day.’⁸⁵ Given the similarities of the Parousia with the Day of the Lord, the Parousia most likely describes an aspect of the Day of the Lord for it shares some, but not all, of the same imagery and concepts of the Day of the Lord.

⁸⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 271. [emphasis original]

⁸⁵ Johnson, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 135. (emphasis original)

7 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

This chapter seeks to add to the literature on the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians by exploring how Paul uses the Day of the Lord. Paul uses the Day of the Lord motif explicitly for the first time, drawing out the implications of the motif for Thessalonian belief and behaviour. This chapter will specifically address how Paul uses the motif in 1 Thessalonians and whether he appropriates it, and in what way, for the Thessalonian congregation. This chapter will also investigate the purpose for which Paul employs the motif and how he utilises it in his exhortation to the Thessalonians.

The method will follow that applied to 4:13-18.

7.1 Context

First Thessalonians 5:1-11 continues to focus on what will transpire when Christ returns. While 4:13-18 focuses on what will happen to those who are asleep, 5:1-11 addresses those who are awake.¹ This topical connection, coupled with the connective conjunction δέ could simply imply a possible continuation from 4:13-18, and there are strong literary links between the two pericopes to be used as evidence.² These literary links include repetition of ‘the dead in Christ; and ‘we who are alive’, living with him, use of apocalyptic imagery, citation of creedal material, contrast with ‘the rest’, and the reference to believers being with the Lord.³ However, there are good reasons for treating 5:1-11 as a separate pericope: 1) The topic shifts to speaking of the coming judgment; 2) Paul opens this section with two clear transition markers, περὶ δέ and the vocative ἀδελφοί (brothers); 3) Use of the phrase ‘you have no need to have anything written to you’ (οὐ χρειᾶν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι) and lastly; 4) 4:18 closes with the expectation of a new topic.⁴ A further reason is the content given that in 4:13 Paul does not want the Thessalonians to be unknowing, but in 5:1 he does not need to write and in verse

¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 339.

² Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 275. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 339.

³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 304.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

2, they know accurately. Given this, 5:1-11 will be treated as a separate pericope while acknowledging a strong relationship between 4:13-18 and 5:1-11.⁵

Luckensmeyer posits that the purpose of the pericope is paraenetic, asking not ‘why is this material introduced?’ but rather ‘how does this material function within the paraenetic material?’⁶ A further question that also should be asked is how does this material function differently from the previous pericope (4:13-18)? In 4:13-18 it was found that Paul did not want the Thessalonians to be unknowing about the hope of those are deceased in Christ, which in turn affected their grieving. In 5:1-11 Paul says, he does not need to write about the times and seasons of coming day of Christ’s parousia but they know accurately concerning the Day of the Lord. Whereas the focus in 4:13-18 was on those who had died and how to grieve, the focus of 5:1-11 is on the living and faithful living in light Christ’s parousia. This is seen in the way Paul utilises the metaphor of sleep. In 4:13-18 those who κοιμάω (sleep) (4:13) are those who will be caught up with Jesus at his coming, whereas in 5:1-11 those who καθεύδω (sleep) (5:6) are those who will be surprised by the judgement Jesus brings when he returns. The Thessalonians are

⁵ Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul*, 64.

⁶ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 294.

to live as *καθεύδω* (awake) knowing that day is coming when they will be with Jesus and not face judgement.

Paul is seeking to show how Jesus parousia in the Day of the Lord should affect all of their behaviour now. This pericope then is about giving assurance to the Thessalonian concerning their eschatological future. This in turn informs their practice.

7.2 *Structure*

There is little consensus among commentators regarding the structure of this pericope due to ‘many changes of person throughout the passage.’⁷ An example of this is seen in the differences between the modern commentators Luckensmeyer, Malherbe, Weima and Boring in their structure of the passage.⁸

The following table outlines the different structures,

Luckensmeyer	vv1-3, vv4-5, vv6-8, vv9-10, v11
Malherbe	vv1-3, vv4-5a, vv5b-10, v11

⁷ Weima 340

⁸ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 278-80; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 287; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 341-42; Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 174.

Weima	vv1-3, vv4-5, vv6-8, vv9-10, v11
Boring	vv1-3, vv4-8, vv9-10, v11

There is general agreement that verses 1-3 form a section, for in verse 4 ἀδελφοί combined with the conjunction δέ indicates a new syntactical unit. But there is little agreement where this syntactical unit ends and the next one begins. A logical marker is provided at verse 6, ἄρα οὖν, which sets out the paraenetic consequences of verse 4-5.⁹ Holmstrand suggests there should be no division marker between 8 and 9 in his structure, however the conjunction ὅτι does indicate a shift from exhortation to providing a reason for the exhortation given in verse 8.¹⁰ Verse 11 with the conjunction διό looks back on the whole pericope. Considering this the following structure will be adopted, vv1-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10 and 11.

⁹ Holmstrand, *Markers and Meaning in Paul*, 65.

¹⁰ Ibid.

7.3 *Greek Text Flow Diagram*

- 1 Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν,
 ἀδελφοί,
 οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι,
- 2 αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε
 ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου
 ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ
 οὕτως ἔρχεται.
- 3 ὅταν λέγωσιν·
 εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια,
 τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος
 ὥσπερ ἡ ὥδιν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ,
 καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν.
- 4 ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί,
 οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει,
 ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ·
- 5 πάντες γὰρ
 ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας.
 Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους·
- 6 ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν
 ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ
 ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν.
- 7 Οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν
 καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν·
- 8 ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες
 νήφωμεν
 ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης
 καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·
- 9 ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν
 ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας
 διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

- 10 τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν,
 ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορῶμεν
 εἴτε καθεύδωμεν
 ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν.
- 11 Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἕνα,
 καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

7.4 *Exegesis*

7.4.1 Verse 1

Περὶ δὲ τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ὑμῖν γράφεσθαι,

Verse 1 introduces the topic of the pericope, namely that Paul is now writing about the times and seasons of Christ's return. The terms τῶν χρόνων καὶ τῶν καιρῶν (the times and the seasons), are in this context synonymous, both expressing the same eschatological idea of Jesus' return.¹¹ This phrase also appears in Acts 1:7 where Jesus' return is set to occur at God's appointed time. Implicit within the phrase is the concept of judgment, with καιρός, in both biblical and non-biblical sources referring to judgment.¹²

¹¹ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 288.

¹² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 334.

Unlike the previous topic where Paul did not want the Thessalonians to be unknowing (4:13), here he does not need to write to the Thessalonians. Luckensmeyer raises the question of why then Paul writes this section, and he answers by citing Malherbe, that Paul was comforting the Thessalonians and preparing them for the following exhortation.¹³ Malherbe also highlights that Paul does not further address the issue of the timing of the day but is concerned to explain how life is to be lived with knowledge of the certainty of the Day of the Lord's coming.¹⁴

7.4.2 Verse 2

αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἶδατε ὅτι ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς ἐν νυκτὶ οὕτως ἔρχεται.

The connective γάρ (for) provides the reason Paul does not need to write on this topic. The second person plural pronoun (αὐτοί) refers to the 'brothers' (ἀδελφοί) in verse 1. The second person perfect verb οἶδατε (to know) with the adverb ἀκριβῶς (accurately) indicates what the Thessalonians do already know, indicated by ὅτι clause, 'that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.'

¹³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 287; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 289.

¹⁴ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 289.

The ἡμέρα κυρίου (Day of the Lord) in the first part of the phrase introduces the motif explicitly for the first time. It finds its referent in the Old Testament and Paul here uses the motif to refer to Christ's return. Up until this point in the epistle he has used the more technical term Parousia.¹⁵ The following simile ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτί (as a thief in the night) describes an aspect of this day, namely the timing, which he wanted the Thessalonians to remember. Richard disagrees with the assessment that ἡμέρα κυρίου refers to Christ's coming, claiming that because Paul uses the simile of ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτί (as a thief in the night), rather than Christ coming, Paul is referring more generally to the end times rather than Christ's coming when using the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου.¹⁶ In assessing this claim, it is necessary to see how the simile is used with reference to the Parousia. The simile of the thief in the night is recognised as being a uniquely Christian phrase, having no precedent in the Hebrew Bible or Judaism.¹⁷ Stanley surveys the use of this motif within the New Testament and concludes that of 17 uses, five of these refer to the 'eschatological parousia of Christ or God' (Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39; 2 Peter 3:10) and two occurrences likely refer to the Parousia (Revelation 3:3, 16:15). He concludes 'the diverse provenance of the few assured texts suggest

¹⁵ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 346.

¹⁶ Richard and Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 250.

¹⁷ Christopher Stanley, "Who's afraid of a thief in the night?," *New Testament Studies* 48, no. 4 (2002): 468.

that the image of Jesus returning 'like a thief' was a common motif in early Christ parenesis.¹⁸ Therefore we can affirm that Day of the Lord had in Christian thought become associated with the return of Christ, which would occur at the end times.¹⁹

There are two suggestions as to why Paul uses the phrase 'Day of the Lord' here. The first is that the Thessalonians have framed a concern in terms of the Day of the Lord and so Paul responds in similar language. The second, and more likely, is that Paul explicitly uses this language because the Day of the Lord 'better conveys the notion of judgment' associated with Christ's return and also the Day of the Lord is a favourite of Paul's with the phrase and slight variations of the phrase being used twice as often as the term Parousia to speak of Christ's return.²⁰ The thief in the night conveys the unexpected nature of this day of judgment and that it is a day that should be feared.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 469.

¹⁹ This is in agreement with Johnson, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 135.

²⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 346; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 291.

²¹ Stanley, "Who's afraid of a thief in the night?," 485-86.

The motif of the thief in the night is an image affirming that the timing of the Day of the Lord will come at an unknown time, an idea further developed in verse 3. Paul uses the present indicative ἔρχεται (to come) to refer to this coming event. That the coming is at the end of the clause emphasises the temporal aspect of the Day of the Lord, and the use of the present tense-form suggests certainty about the events coming but also encodes the verbal aspect of proximity, to mean this event is not something so far in the distance that the Thessalonians are not to be affected by it, but rather the coming Day of the Lord is imminent.²²

7.4.3 Verse 3

ὅταν λέγωσιν· εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, τότε αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται ὄλεθρος ὥσπερ ἡ ὥδιν τῇ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσῃ, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐκφύγωσιν.

Verse 3 continues to expound the themes introduced in verse 2, namely the judgment associated with the Day of the Lord and the suddenness with which it will come, and applies it to those outside the Thessalonian church. Verse 3 is a subordinate conjunction indicating a temporal aspect, drawing attention to those

²² Constantine Campbell, *Verbal aspect, the indicative mood and narrative: soundings in the Greek of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Lang Publishing, 2007), 50.

who are saying ‘peace and security.’ Weima concludes, that verse 3 draws a comparison between those who belong to the day and those who do not.²³

The opening third person pronoun λέγωσιν introduces what outsiders put their confidence in, εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια (peace and security). This phrase traditionally has been interpreted as a reference to the Old Testament prophets who declare peace, when there is no peace (cf. Jeremiah 6:14; Ezekiel 13:10 and Micah 3:5). Modern commentary has moved away from this interpretation. For example, Luckensmeyer says there is no connection between this saying and the prophetic sayings.²⁴ For it to be a reference to Old Testament prophets, Luckensmeyer posits that in Thessalonica there would need to be false prophets teaching an alternative eschatological truth to Paul’s, of which there is no evidence.²⁵ Further to this Wiema notes, the Thessalonian church is a predominantly Gentile to whom the Old Testament would be a foreign text. There are no Old Testament references in

²³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 347. It is worth noting that many manuscripts (8² B D) have the conjunction δέ providing a more direct link with verse 2. This strengthens the contrast between those who know the day of the Lord is coming and those who say ‘peace and security’. ὅταν (8* A F G 33) is better attested and highlights the more temporal nature when the day of the Lord will come and is the harder reading and so is the preferred reading.

²⁴ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 290.

²⁵ Ibid.

Thessalonians, nowhere else does Paul introduce a quote from the Old Testament with ‘while they are saying’ and finally, the Old Testament deals only with false peace and not security.²⁶ The most common interpretation today, most recently argued by Weima, is that the saying refers to a commonly known and understood *pax romana* from imperial Rome, which boasted of peace and security.²⁷ Malherbe rejects this reading on the basis that Thessalonica and the Thessalonian church were not in conflict and suggests that Paul is borrowing the term from Epicurean false teachers.²⁸ However, this view lacks textual evidence. White also responds to Weima and assesses the evidence concluding that when 1 Thessalonians was written ‘peace and security’ was not a phrase used by imperialist Rome.²⁹ In a further article White elaborates and concludes that ‘peace’ was Roman propaganda for stability, and that ‘security’ is borrowed from the Hellenistic conception of the ‘polis’ providing security.³⁰ Paul then joins the

²⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 349.

²⁷ Ibid. For a more detailed outline of Weima cf. Jeffrey Weima, "'Peace and Security' (1 Thess 5.3) : Prophetic Warning or Political Propaganda?," *New Testament Studies* 58, no. 3 (2012).

²⁸ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 292.

²⁹ Joel White, "'Peace and Security' (1 Thessalonians 5.3) : Is It Really a Roman Slogan?," *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 3 (2013): 395.

³⁰ Joel White, "'Peace' and 'Security' (1 Thess 5.3) : Roman Ideology and Greek Aspiration," *New Testament Studies* 60, no. 4 (2014): 501, 06.

two terms together, thus coining the phrase.³¹ In this view, Paul is warning the Thessalonians not to place their trust in the Roman imperial administration or Hellenistic civic virtues.³² Paul is not citing a common saying but creating one. Gupta accepts White's findings regarding the evidence, but postulates that Paul is warning against Jewish false prophets who are encouraging the Thessalonians to turn back to the idols they turned away from.³³ This view is similar to the traditional view of false prophets in the Old Testament.³⁴ In light of these developments, the text itself suggests it was a common phrase already in use, with ὅταν λέγωσιν (while they are saying), suggesting a quote, which makes it unlikely that Paul coined the phrase. However, the assumption that the phrase 'peace and security' refers only to imperial propaganda needs further study considering White's work. As a common phrase, however, referring to commonly held values in society, the phrase serves to highlight that the confidence of those outside the church is misplaced and the Thessalonians are right to continue waiting for Jesus (1:9-10).

³¹ Ibid., 506.

³² Ibid., 508.

³³ Gupta, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 105.

³⁴ Gupta acknowledges this within his argument. See *ibid.*

The present λέγωσιν (while they are saying) coupled with conjunction τότε (then) draws attention to the starkness of the situation. The ὄλεθρος (destruction) is going to αἰφνίδιος αὐτοῖς ἐφίσταται (suddenly come upon them). The word ἐφίσταται (come upon) is in the present tense. Malherbe translates this ‘when they say, “peace and security”... *ruin comes* upon them’ keeping the sense of the present in the context of the future.³⁵ Boring translates ἐφίσταται with a future perspective ‘while people are saying... destruction *will come* upon them.’³⁶ The context of the future Day of the Lord suggests the latter translation is better, but both have the same sense, namely judgement will come while people revel in their false peace and security. The present tense-form also encodes proximity which once again draws attention to the imminence of this judgment.³⁷ The nature of the destruction is not spelt out here, except to say that it is sudden and inescapable. Paul employs a simile, introduced by the comparative conjunction ὥσπερ (just as), that of a woman in the pain of birth. Gempf notes that this image can have both a positive connotation, that is the birth of child, and a negative connotation, where the focus is solely on the pain.³⁸ Paul here employs the negative aspect of the woman giving

³⁵ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 292.

³⁶ Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 175.

³⁷ Campbell, *Verbal aspect, the indicative mood and narrative: soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, 50.

³⁸ Conrad Gempf, "The Imagery of Birth Pangs in the New Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 1 (1994): 134.

birth, not focusing on the judgment, but rather the pain and the suddenness with which it comes. This is the same way in which Isaiah uses the metaphor (Isaiah 13:7). The judgment will not be pleasant and what Paul makes clear, using the strongest negation οὐ μή, is there will be no escape from the Day of the Lord. Hence the Day of the Lord will also provide vindication for the believers in Thessalonica who are amid conflict.

7.4.4 Verse 4 and 5

4 ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σκότει, ἵνα ἡ ἡμέρα ὑμᾶς ὡς κλέπτῃς καταλάβῃ·
 5 πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. Οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους·

Verse 4 marks a new subunit within the larger pericope of 5:1-11, with the emphatic second person pronoun ὑμεῖς, and the address ἀδελφοί (brothers) while the conjunction δέ introduces a contrast to verse 3. It is a warmer tone that addresses directly the Thessalonian church.³⁹

³⁹ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 293.

Paul introduces a common metaphor of darkness and light which serves to heighten the distinction between those who are aware of the eschatological reality of the Day of the Lord and those who are not. The usage of light and darkness is drawn from the Old Testament and inter-testamental Jewish writings, where light is used of insiders and darkness of outsiders.⁴⁰ Furthermore the motif is used to describe a person's moral status before God. Weima notes,

The “light” and “day” motif symbolizes both the Thessalonians’ state of righteousness and their knowledge about the imminent arrival of the Day of the Lord, whereas “darkness” and “night” symbolize both the non-Christians’ state of sinfulness and their ignorance about the impending judgment they will experience at Christ’s return.⁴¹

The Thessalonians’ present reality in Christ is indicated by the verb ἐστέ (you are) and the negated prepositional phrase ἐν σκότει (in darkness). The Thessalonians are not in darkness but are ‘anchored in the future Day of the Lord.’⁴² The ἵνα indicates the result of the Thessalonians not being darkness, ἡ ἡμέρα (the day)

⁴⁰ Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia : an exegetical and theological investigation* (Peabody, MA Hendrickson, 1997), 108.

⁴¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 354.

⁴² Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 182.

will not overtake them as a thief, that is, it will not come as a surprise. The purpose of employing this metaphor of darkness and light according to Luckensmeyer, 'is to build community identity and existence'.⁴³ While this might be true, the more immediate purpose is to assure the Thessalonians that they will not face the judgment associated with the Day of the Lord.

This is evident in verse 5. The conjunction γάρ, connects verse 5 to verse 4 and provides the reason why the Thessalonians are not in darkness. The word πάντες (all) at the beginning of the verse emphasises the Thessalonians' present reality positively, they are υἱοὶ φωτός (sons of the light) and υἱοὶ ἡμέρας (sons of the day). The two genitive phrases are describing qualities that characterise the Thessalonians.⁴⁴ Luckensmeyer says that Paul probably thought that the phrases were synonymous, but Richard, Plevnik and Wiema note that while the moral component of both statements are the same, the phrase, 'sons of the day' also has the eschatological weight of referring to the Day of the Lord.⁴⁵ The phrase, 'sons of the day' is unique to Paul and he likely coined it.⁴⁶ This unique phrase, 'sons

⁴³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 298-99.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 297; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 356.

⁴⁵ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 297; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 356; Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 109-10; Richard and Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 262-63.

⁴⁶ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 356.

of the day', shows that Paul is applying the Day of the Lord in a new way to the believers, where the age of the Day of the Lord has already begun. The Thessalonians are not waiting to belong to the Day of the Lord, for they already belong to it and so are to wait for it expectantly. Meanwhile, they are to live out the righteous life of someone who belongs to the day.

The second part of verse 5 is an asyndeton, and it completes the thought already introduced. The reason for the asyndeton is that Paul changes from speaking in the second person plural to include himself with the first person plural ἐσμέν (we). He draws attention to the fact that if the Thessalonians belong to the day, they, like Paul, do not belong to the darkness or night.

7.4.5 Verse 6 and 7

6 ἄρα οὖν μὴ καθεύδωμεν ὡς οἱ λοιποὶ ἀλλὰ γρηγορῶμεν καὶ νήφωμεν. 7 Οἱ γὰρ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καθεύδουσιν καὶ οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι νυκτὸς μεθύουσιν·

Verse 6 begins ἄρα οὖν (so then), an inferential conjunction that is followed by a hortatory subjunctive μὴ καθεύδωμεν (we do not sleep), which transitions Paul's argument, from addressing who the Thessalonians are to paraenesis, that is, how they are to live in light of who they are. Paul uses the first person plural to include

himself in the exhortation. The exhortation *μὴ καθεύδωμεν* is a different verb used than in 4:13-18 and it has three possible senses: 1) spiritual indifference; 2) a literal reference to sleep; and 3) a figurative reference to death.⁴⁷ The sense on view needs to be determined by usage in context. The word *καθεύδωμεν* is part of the exhortation by Paul which is qualified by a simile *ὡς οἱ λοιποί* (like the rest). In 4:13 this same simile is used to refer to those who have no hope, and so too here. Paul is not exhorting the Thessalonians to never physically sleep or be dead (sense 2 and 3) but to not be like those who do not know the Day of the Lord is coming. The sense on view in this verse is the first meaning of spiritual indifference.⁴⁸ The rest sleep because they are not aware of the spiritual reality of the Day of the Lord and the coming judgment from which they cannot escape.⁴⁹ People who belong to the day do not have this same spiritual indifference.

This sense of spiritual indifference is further confirmed with *ἀλλὰ* contrasting the spiritual indifference with the behaviour of someone who knows they belong to Day of the Lord. The verb *γρηγορῶμεν* refers predominantly in the New Testament to mean being alert and is used of being prepared for the Parousia of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 358; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 295.

⁴⁸ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 358; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 295.

⁴⁹ BDAG: 490. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 358.

the Lord (Matthew 24:42-43; 25:13; Mark 13:35-38; Luke 12:37).⁵⁰ The second option refers to being sober or self-controlled. ‘The first command involves a call to be “ready” for the Day of the Lord, while the second is to be “steady” in one’s attitude and actions associated with that day.’⁵¹

The conjunction γάρ connects verse 7 and continues the logic of why those who belong to the day are to be alert and sober. The substantive participle καθεύδοντες (those who sleep) is to be taken in its literal sense which is made clear by the finite verb καθεύδουσιν which refers to sleeping at night. In context, however, it should also be noted that sleeping at night is a figurative antonym to being alert. The same is true of the second parallel statement which addresses drunkenness, where being sober is the figurative antonym.⁵² The substantive participle indicates that οἱ μεθυσκόμενοι (those who get drunk) do so at νυκτός (night). It was the case that drunkenness during the day by the general population was considered more reprehensible than being drunk at night.⁵³ One interpretation that Luckensmeyer rightly rejects as eisegesis, is that Christians should never sleep or drink wine.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 300.

⁵¹ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 359.

⁵² Boring, *I & II Thessalonians*, 183.

⁵³ Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 254; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 360.

⁵⁴ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 302.

This verse, rather, shows that the behaviour of someone who belongs to the day is not associated with the ignorance and immorality of those who belong to the night.

7.4.6 Verse 8

ἡμεῖς δὲ ἡμέρας ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας·

In verse 8 Paul shifts the focus to the eschatological motive that the Day of the Lord provides for being alert and sober.⁵⁵ Verse 8 continues the exhortations begun in verse 6, with the conjunction δέ. The pronoun ἡμεῖς is emphatic and serves to highlight the difference between those who sleep and get drunk with those ἡμέρας ὄντες (who belong to the day).⁵⁶ This affirmation of belonging to the day follows the pattern of Paul's paraenetic material in that it reminds the Thessalonians of their identity before giving the exhortation. The first exhortation is a repetition of verse 6, that they are to be νήφωμεν (sober) but is expressed without the exhortation to be alert as in verse 6. Weima hesitantly suggests this is due to the issue the Thessalonians were grappling with, the times and seasons, as

⁵⁵ Richard and Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 254.

⁵⁶ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 302; Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 361.

introduced in verse 1.⁵⁷ The Thessalonians did not need to be continually reminded of the coming day, but rather how to live knowing the day is coming.

The aorist participle ἐνδυσάμενοι (putting on) introduces the metaphor of the armour of God. This action of the putting on the armour is either contemporaneous or antecedent. Weima argues that because the verb follows the present finite verb ὄντες it should be interpreted as a contemporaneous action, that is, putting on the armour is how someone who belongs to the day is sober.⁵⁸ However, recent work on verbal aspect suggests that the aorist substantive participle is normally antecedent, which would mean being clothed in the armour leads to the practice of being sober.⁵⁹ This latter interpretation fits the context better and aligns with 1 Thessalonians 1:3 where faith hope and love are also antecedent. The armour is the θώρακα (breastplate) where the genitive πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης (faith and love) modify the noun, and the περικεφαλαίαν (helmet) is in apposition to the ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας (hope of salvation).

⁵⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 361-62.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 362.

⁵⁹ Campbell, *The Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek*, 123.

The armour imagery is taken from Isaiah 59:16-17 where God takes up the armour to bring about his own salvation,

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. (ESV)

This passage speaks about the judgment God is going to unleash upon those who have turned away from him, while saving those who cry out to him.⁶⁰ God himself is going to come down and bring salvation and it is couched in apocalyptic terms where ‘the greatest intervention of God is still to come.’⁶¹ In Thessalonians this is what we see with the Day of the Lord, an event of both judgment and salvation initiated by the coming parousia of the Lord. Paul, as in other places (Cf. Ephesians 6:10-20), has appropriated the verse so that it is the believers putting on the armour with the triad of faith, love and hope. Possible only because the believers already belong to this coming day. The triad of faith, hope and love is

⁶⁰ Webb, *Isaiah*, 231.

⁶¹ Ibid.

mentioned in 1:3, and like in 1:3, hope is given the place of prominence within the triad.⁶² The prominence of hope in this section should not be understated, for as people who belong to the day, they have the hope of salvation and not judgment. The Thessalonians and Paul are to put on the eschatological armour of the Lord to live sober lives, worthy of the day of salvation for which they belong. The Day of the Lord is not something to be feared but anticipated.

7.4.7 Verse 9

ὅτι οὐκ ἔθετο ἡμῶς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας διὰ τοῦ κυρίου
ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

The conjunction ὅτι provides a further reason for being sober. The reason given is due to God's election. God is the subject of the aorist verb ἔθετο (appointed) and the aorist tense-form gives the appointing a sense of remoteness, meaning it is something that God has already done and so is not affected by the Thessalonian behaviour. The word ἔθετο can mean 'he places' but it is used here in a fuller

⁶² This is indicated by 1) the faith and love sharing a piece of armour, whereas hope has its own, 2) the different syntax of the accusative of apposition from that of genitives of faith and love 3) hope ends the series and 4) hope has its own object which is salvation. Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 298.

sense for God appointing.⁶³ Luckensmeyer in his exegesis is careful to emphasise that being appointed by God does not negate the need for active behaviour on the part of the Thessalonians to live self-controlled lives, highlighting the need for perseverance on the part of the Thessalonians.⁶⁴ Luckensmeyer, however, emphasises human responsibility at the expense of good exegesis at this point. Context suggests perseverance is not an issue currently being addressed and the motif of election is introduced here to once again reinforce the eschatological reality of the Thessalonians, namely, they belong to the day and God has appointed them to it. It increases the certainty with which the Thessalonians can hope for the Day of the Lord. Their status on the Day of the Lord is secure because God has appointed them to it.

The negation οὐκ makes it clear that God has not appointed the Thessalonians εἰς ὀργήν (to wrath). This ὀργήν refers to the sudden destruction in 5:2-3 and so its focus is not present wrath but wrath that is to come. This is supported by the reference of ὀργῆς in 1:10 where the Thessalonians are rescued from the coming wrath and by the context of the passage which is future orientated, especially when the judgment spoken of in 5:2-4 is on those who say peace and security. In 2:16,

⁶³ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 365.

⁶⁴ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 304.

the notion of a present ὀργή is raised, but that is not on view here. The Day of the Lord is future, and the final eschatological judgement that day brings is in the future and the Thessalonians have been not been appointed to it. Weima notes an implicit reference to the coming Day of the Lord where the ‘notion of eschatological wrath originates’ in the Old Testament.⁶⁵ What the Thessalonians have been appointed to is made clear by the contrast of the strong adversative ἀλλά and the prepositional phrase εἰς περιποίησιν σωτηρίας (to obtain salvation). The verb ἔθετο in this clause is elliptical, you have not been *appointed* to wrath but *appointed* to obtain salvation. The noun περιποίησιν (obtain) could also be interpreted to mean receive. However, given the future event of judgment and salvation within the passage, the word means obtain. What is being obtained is salvation, that is, deliverance from judgment.

The σωτηρίας is qualified by the prepositional phrase διὰ with a genitive of agency τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (by means of our Lord, Jesus Christ). This same phrase is used of Jesus in 1:3 where ‘our Lord, Jesus Christ’ is the object of the Thessalonian’s hope. Here Jesus is the means by which they enter the hope of salvation. A Christological implication of calling Jesus κυρίου, is that Paul uses

⁶⁵ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 366.

this term to refer to Jesus' divinity. In the context of the Day of the Lord, Paul is associating the activities of Yahweh in the Day of the Lord, with Jesus' coming.

7.4.8 Verse 10

10 τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα εἴτε γρηγορώμεν εἴτε καθεύδωμεν ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν.

Verse 10 explains how Jesus can be the means of salvation. The article τοῦ is anaphoric referring back to 'our Lord Jesus Christ' with the aorist participle ἀποθανόντος indicating the action Jesus took to make salvation possible. Jesus' death was not simply an example, but the words ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (for us) indicate the purpose for which he died. The Thessalonians' appointment to salvation is reliant on the event of Christ's death. Weima writes,

In the context of discussing the future salvation of the Thessalonian Christians on the coming Day of the Lord, it may seem surprising that Paul refers not to Christ's imminent return but to his past death. In the apostle's mind, however, their future obtaining of salvation instead of

eschatological wrath is ultimately dependent on the previous work of Christ, “who died.”⁶⁶

Luckensmeyer provides an alternate understanding where he does not want to read into the words ‘for us’ the possibility of atonement or substitution.⁶⁷ Luckensmeyer interprets the words ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν to refer to a participation and sharing of experiences as a more accurate description of the relationship between Christ and the believers. He writes ‘there is no thought of Christ and the believer changing places’ and references the term ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ (together with him) at the end of the verse in support.⁶⁸ This, however, is not the way Paul normally employs the use of ‘for us’. Malherbe and Richards do not draw conclusions on what ‘for us’ could mean, saying that the statement here is ‘underdeveloped.’⁶⁹ While this statement is not a full explanation of what Christ achieved on the cross, Paul uses the term ‘for us’ to refer to his substitutionary death for sin multiple times. As Weima again notes

⁶⁶ Ibid., 368.

⁶⁷ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 305.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Richard and Harrington, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 256; Malherbe, *Thessalonians*, 299.

As brief as the preposition phrase “for us” may be, it clearly has in view the substitutionary character of Christ’s death for believer’s sins. This can be deduced from a number of instances elsewhere in Paul’s Letters where he uses either exactly the same language (“to die for”: Romans 6:6; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:15) or similar wording (“to give oneself for”: Galatians 1:3-4; 2:20; Romans 8:32; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14) and then often follows up these phrases with explicit statements about the atoning consequences of Christ’s death.⁷⁰

Dunn notes that ‘for us’ was a well known creedal statement in the early church.⁷¹

The Thessalonian church had been founded on Paul’s preaching of Jesus’ death (Acts 17:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:10) and the Thessalonians did not need it to be restated here.⁷² Jesus experienced the judgment that the Day of the Lord brings in his death as a substitute for the Thessalonians. The outcome of this is the Thessalonians will now escape this judgment and have salvation when Jesus returns.

⁷⁰ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 368.

⁷¹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 175.

⁷² Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 368.

The next clause outlines the eschatological future of those for whom Jesus died. Luckensmeyer concludes that γρηγορέω (awake) and καθεύδω (asleep) do not refer to awake meaning alive or asleep meaning death, but rather to vigilance and indolence respectively.⁷³ This is based on the fact that the two verbs appear in the passage earlier with different meanings, and that the usage of the verbs meaning alive or dead is rare. Luckensmeyer applies his own ‘eschatological hermeneutic’ to the verse in an attempt to justify his reading but this does not make his position any clearer.⁷⁴ The logical end of this interpretation for this verse is that no matter whether the Thessalonians are vigilant or indolent they will be with Christ, which does not fit the context or Paul’s exhortation to be sober. Luckensmeyer does not allow the context of the passage to inform his exegesis, where the behavior of Christians who belong to the day differs from non-Christians who do not. To suggest that Paul now says it does not matter how someone lives, after his exhortations to be alert and sober is incongruous.⁷⁵ Heil develops this position and posits that γρηγορέω (awake) and καθεύδω (asleep) refer being asleep to holiness or vigilant to holiness, and it is a call for the Thessalonians who living unholy

⁷³ Luckensmeyer, *Eschatology*, 307-12.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 370.

lives to wake up.⁷⁶ In support of this Heil references the rest of 1 Thessalonians paranaetic material to suggest that unholiness was an issue Paul was addressing. However within the pericope, being sober minded and alert is related to the coming Day of the Lord, and it is an encouragement to the Thessalonians, not a rebuke making this thesis unlikely. These verbs instead take on a metaphorical meaning and refer rather to believers who have died, fallen asleep, and those who are alive, still awake in the Lord.

The following subjunctive clause completes the result which was introduced by ἵνα that ἅμα σὺν αὐτῷ ζήσωμεν (we will together live with him). As in 4:13-18, this result is expressed to bring comfort to the Thessalonians. It is the image of God's people living with the resurrected Jesus, the Lord, which is a motif of the Day of the Lord in Jewish Scriptures. When the Day of the Lord arrives, this reality will be realised.

7.4.9 Verse 11

Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἰς τὸν ἕνα, καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε.

⁷⁶ John Heil, "Those Now 'Asleep' (not dead) Must be 'Awakened' for the Day of the Lord in 1 Thess 5.9–10," *New Testament Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000): 469.

As at the end of the pericope 4:13-18, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to encourage each other with this teaching and build each other up. The inferential διό draws a logical connection between the previous teaching and the current exhortation.⁷⁷ The Thessalonians are to use these teachings to παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους (encourage one another). What has been added from 4:18 in 5:11 is the idea of οἰκοδομεῖτε εἰς τὸν ἕνα (building another up). This is not something new to the Thessalonians but rather something they are to continue in as indicated by καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε (just as also you are doing).

The implication of the Thessalonians encouraging each other and building each other up is that the Day of the Lord motif not only serves as a motivator for godly living, but in fact teaching that the Day of the Lord is coming and that they belong to the day, serves to affirm the Thessalonians in their eschatological future reality.

7.5 Conclusion

What does this chapter contribute to our knowledge of how Paul used the Day of the Lord motif?

⁷⁷ Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 373.

First, the motif has ethical implications for living as God's people. In the Jewish Scriptures, the motif was used to call an unrepentant people to repentance (Amos 9:11; Joel 1:13-14; Isaiah 4:2; 49:8). In 1 Thessalonians 5 it is used to call a people who have already turned (1:10), to continue to be sober and alert (5:6, 8). It is used in a positive way, not as a warning but rather as a comfort for the Thessalonians because they do not face judgment as they have been appointed to salvation (5:9). This means the coming day of judgment, rather than something to be fearful of, is to be used to build up and encourage one another (5:1-11) for it is a reminder of the Thessalonians salvation. This affirms the hope which they have in the gospel.

Second, the Day of the Lord is something that the Thessalonians belong to (5:8). The certainty with which they know they will share in salvation and be with Jesus on this day, makes it their day. Their identity is now that they belong to this Day of the Lord that Jesus will bring when he returns. Furthermore, their identity is also their motivation for ethical living in being sober and alert (5:6).

Third, the Day of the Lord is a day of imminent judgment which no one will escape (5:2). Like in the Jewish scriptures (Joel 1:15; Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:2-3), no one knows the times or seasons but it is a day that is certainly coming (5:1-2). The judgment will be upon all the nations, here defined not geographically, but rather

by the category of those who say ‘peace and safety.’ The judgment, like in the Jewish Scriptures (Amos 2:16; Isaiah 13:7), will be painful as in childbirth and unescapable for those whose allegiance is not to Jesus (5:3). The Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians refers to the final eschatological judgment of Yahweh.

Fourth, the pericope’s tight relationship with 4:13-18 suggests a strong relationship between the Parousia and the Day of the Lord. As discussed in our conclusion of 4:13-18, the Parousia has areas of conceptual similarity but does not refer to the exact same event. Paul uses the Day of the Lord to emphasise the coming judgment.

Fifth, the Thessalonians escape judgment because Jesus died for them, substituting himself, and taking the eschatological judgment for sin upon himself (5:9). This is why the Day of the Lord for the Thessalonians is a day of escaping judgment and receiving the goal of their salvation: being with Christ.

Lastly, Paul’s appropriation becomes further evidence for demonstrating Paul’s high Christology, with the Day of the Lord becoming the Day of the Lord Jesus

Christ.⁷⁸ Paul's use of this motif applied to Christ is another piece of evidence that Paul viewed Jesus as divine and equal to Yahweh. It is worth noting that while Paul does use scriptural allusions from Isaiah he does not pick up the theme of suffering servant and appropriate it within the motif. Nor does Paul use the expected messenger in relation to Day of the Lord from Malachi.

Paul uses the motif of the Day of the Lord in line with the Jewish Scriptures but shapes and moulds it to give comfort to the Thessalonian believers, to encourage them to godly living, and to remind them of the judgment that is coming for those who have not turned to Jesus. As Ridderbos notes,

It is clear both that the motif of the fulfilment, of already belonging to the day, finds expression here, and on the other hand that, as the great day of the Lord, this day is coming and with its beams is illuminating the present. The coming of the Lord can for this reason not only be a motive for sanctification, but also a source and ground of comfort in the present "affliction."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ David Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh texts in Paul's christology* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe ; v. 47; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992).

⁷⁹ Paul Ridderbos, *Paul: an outline of his theology* (trans. Witt; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 488.

8 Conclusion

Our exploration of the Day of the Lord in Jewish Scriptures and in 1 Thessalonians has focused on how Paul's Jewish perspective and his reliance on the Jewish Scriptures informs his use of the motif. The following contributions were expected to be made to the current literature:

- 1) A study of how Paul uses and appropriates the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians;
- 2) Establish the source of Paul's use of this motif and what he understands by it; and
- 3) Ascertain whether Paul uses 'Parousia' and 'Day of the Lord' to mean and refer to the same thing.

Part 1 began by surveying the current literature on the Day of the Lord, looking at the motif's origin, and the literary approaches to understanding the motif. We also drew special attention to where 1 Thessalonians was included in the study. This demonstrated that there was little consensus as to the exact definition and referent of the motif the Day of the Lord. This conclusion meant that if Paul is reliant on the Jewish Scriptures for the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians a fresh study of how the motif is used within those Scriptures is necessary. In terms of the New Testament, studies treated the motif systematically and paid little attention to the context of the book within which the motif was found.

Part 1 concluded by addressing some preliminary issues concerning methodology and approach, that is, the study was going to focus primarily on the Greek text of 1 Thessalonians. Furthermore, it was found that the context of the Thessalonians was one of conflict caused by their own countrymen.

Part 2 assessed what influenced Paul's use of the Day of the Lord: the Hellenistic culture that surrounded him or his Jewish roots and Pharisaism? It was found that Paul was a faithful Jew who viewed Jesus and his own ministry through the lens of the Jewish Scriptures and hence the Jewish Scriptures were the informing

source of Paul's use of the motif. Considering this, it was necessary then to study the Day of the Lord in the Jewish Scriptures, selecting representative books through which to study the motif in its context. The study of the Old Testament found that the motif itself was flexible. It was able to refer to local judgment and the coming eschatological judgment which will consume all the nations. This was emphasised through descriptive imagery such as darkness, trouble, gloom, trembling, Yahweh coming in fire and labour pains. This judgment was imminent and had an ethical appeal implicit in it, that was, to turn back to the Lord. Furthermore, the motif was used to express salvation for God's faithful people providing both hope and vindication. Lastly, it was found this was the day that Yahweh would come and reveal himself to the world, with the possibility hinted at, that the coming of the suffering servant could bring this great and dreadful day.

Part 3 then studied the Greek text of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 to ascertain how Paul used the motif and appropriated it for the Thessalonians. The pericope 4:13-18 was included to assess whether Paul used the motif of the Parousia interchangeably with the motif of the Day of the Lord. It also provided context for 5:1-11 where the motif was used explicitly and ensured that 5:1-11 was not treated in isolation from the rest of the epistle. The study of 4:13-18 found that when Paul used the term Parousia, he did so with an eschatological sense which used similar

language and concepts as coming Day of the Lord, but could not be directly interchanged with the Day of the Lord. The Parousia had in common with the Day of the Lord the theme salvation, theophany and a link to the expectations that the Messiah would be Yahweh coming. The Parousia in this pericope, rather notably, lacked any reference to judgment and the imminence of this judgment but referred to salvation and theophany. The study of 5:1-11 made the following conclusions. First, that while in the Old Testament the motif was used as a warning and a call to repent, Paul used it positively to encourage the Thessalonians for it affirms the certainty of their hope in the gospel. Second, the Thessalonians were characterised as people belonging to the day, the result being that the Day of the Lord encourages the ethical behaviour of being sober and alert and encouraging one another. Third, Paul characterised the Day of the Lord as imminent judgment like in the Jewish Scriptures, which would be complete and from which no one can escape. Fourth, as in 4:13-18, Paul used Day of the Lord instead of the Parousia to emphasise the judgment the Christ will bring. Fifth, the reason the Day of the Lord was positive was because Jesus had died for the Thessalonians, substituting himself by taking the eschatological judgment of the Day of the Lord upon himself. Of note was that Paul did not take up the theme of the suffering servant from Isaiah nor the expected messenger from Malachi. Lastly, by Paul applying

the motif to Jesus, the Day of the Lord informed Paul's high Christology and was evidence that Paul viewed Jesus as God.

With respect to the expected contributions of this study, first, it was demonstrated how Paul used and appropriated the Day of the Lord motif in 1 Thessalonians. Paul used the motif as a means of comfort for the Thessalonian Christians, rather than a warning or a rebuke. Second, the source of Paul's understanding of the motif came from his Jewish understanding of the Scriptures. The Jewish Scriptures depict the Day of the Lord as the day that Yahweh acts decisively in history, bringing both judgment and salvation. Of note is Paul's appropriating the Day of Yahweh's coming with the coming of Christ. Third, it was shown that while the Day of the Lord and the Parousia have some conceptual realities in common and occur at the same time, they are not synonymous, with Paul using the Day of the Lord to emphasise the coming judgment.

One area for further study would be to see whether Paul's use of the motif in his other epistles is consistent with 1 Thessalonians. More broadly, it would be worth considering, whether Paul's use is consistent with the way the motif is used and applied in the gospels and the other epistles, such as 1 Peter and 2 Thessalonians. Further work could also be done on the relationship of the Parousia and the Day

of the Lord, studying a broader cross section of texts that concern the Parousia mapping out their conceptual similarities and differences.

The Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians shows that Paul used the motif in a flexible way that is consistent with his understanding of the Jewish Scriptures. This is the case even though Paul appropriated the motif in a positive way for the Thessalonian church. It is a motif that calls for hope within the Christian church rather than fear. It is used to encourage faithful Christian living as they wait for the day and not as a call to repentance. It is the day that the church of Christ will finally meet their Lord face to face and receive vindication from God. Finally, this day is coming soon, not a distant hope but one that is soon going to be a reality and the whole world will know that Jesus is Lord, either in salvation or in judgment.

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