

THE TWO PEOPLES OF GOD IN 2 THESSALONIANS 1:10

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## THE QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

The distinction between Israel and the church has widely been regarded as one of the central tenants of dispensationalism by both friend and foe. Ryrie contends that this distinction is “probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the church consistently will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and the one who does will.”<sup>1</sup> Amillennialist Oswald T. Allis agrees, noting that this distinction is what necessitates the dispensational assertion of a literal Jewish state during the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth:

Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism; in Dispensationalism it has been carried to an extreme. We have seen that this literalism found its most thoroughgoing expression in the claim that *Israel* must mean *Israel*, and that the Church was a mystery, unknown to the prophets and first made known to the apostle Paul. Now if the principle of interpretation is adopted that *Israel* always means *Israel*, that it does not mean the Church, then it follows of necessity that practically all of our information regarding the millennium will concern a Jewish or Israelitish age.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. and expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 39.

<sup>2</sup> Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the church; an examination of the claim of dispensationalists that the Christian church is a mystery parenthesis which interrupts the fulfilment to Israel of the kingdom*

Interestingly, while rejecting the essentialist<sup>3</sup> description of Ryrie, Blaising concedes, “Among contemporary dispensationalists a general consensus exists that a distinction between Israel and the church is the essential distinguishing factor of dispensationalism. In spite of the fact that the other two (supporting) elements of Ryrie’s triad seem less than tenable, at least in the way he stated them, this characteristic, according to many, seems to be truly representative.”<sup>4</sup>

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*prophecies of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1945), 244.

<sup>3</sup> Darrell Bock divides the recent history of dispensationalism into three categories: “Scofieldian dispensationalism,” which reflects the approach of the 1909 and 1917 editions of *The Scofield Reference Bible*, “Essentialist dispensationalism,” which applies to those subscribing to the approach of later dispensationalists, particularly those who hold to Ryrie’s *sine qua non* description of the fundamental elements of dispensationalism, and “Progressive dispensationalism,” which focuses on the progress of revelation, so that each subsequent dispensation represents “progress” in the unified plan of God. (Darrell L. Bock, “The Son of David and the Saints’ Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment,” *BSac* 150 (1993): 440 n. 1.) This author uses the term “Traditional” when describing the dispensationalism of Ryrie and his contemporaries, following the categories in Herbert W. Bateman, IV, in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. IV Herbert W. Bateman (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Craig A. Blaising, “Development of Dispensationalism by Contemporary Dispensationalists,” *BSac* 145, no. 579 (1988): 273.

### The Need and Purpose of this Study

While there has been much discussion on all sides with regard to this issue, one of the neglected texts in the debate has been 2 Thess 1:10: “when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed – for our testimony to you was believed.”<sup>5</sup> The question so often overlooked is whether or not Paul is referring to one group of believers using a parallel construction, or if he is referring to two separate groups of believers who will be participating in the same event. In other words, are the phrases “πάντες ἄλλοι ἐνδοξασθῆναι ἐν τοῖς ἡμέροις αἰῶσι” and “θαυμάσθῆναι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεῦσασιν” an example of synonymous parallelism, or are the phrases contrastive in nature? If the phrases are contrastive in nature, then what is the identity of the individuals making up the two groups?

This paper will attempt to show that Paul is making a distinction between OT saints and church age saints in this verse. This distinction lends support for the transcendental distinction between Israel and the church that extends through the Day of the Lord.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>6</sup> For a more complete defense of the transcendental distinction between Israel and the church see Bruce A. Baker, “Israel and the Church: The Transcendental Distinction Within the Dispensational Tradition,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 8, no. 2 (2004).

## COMMON INTERPRETATIONS

As one might expect of nearly any passage, the differing exegetical positions for 2 Thess 1:10 tend to divide into easily identifiable schools of thought. These common interpretations will be examined and evaluated below.

### Two groups: Angels and Believers

One of the most noted characteristics of this verse is the use of the uncommon  $\text{ὀδοξάζομαι}$ <sup>7</sup> (I glorify). This word appears only in 2 Thess 1:10, 12 in the NT and is used infrequently in the LXX.<sup>8</sup> What commentators find interesting is the verbal parallel between 2 Thess 1:10 and the Ps 89:7 (88:8).<sup>9</sup> The combination of  $\text{ὀδοξάζομαι}$  and  $\text{ἅγιος}$  occur only in these two verses in the Canon. As a result, there seems to be no significant disagreement among exegetes that Paul was alluding to this OT text.

In the context of Ps 89 (88), the  $\text{βουλή ἁγίων}$  of verse 7 (8) refers to an angelic council. That has led some to conclude that angelic beings are being referred to in 2 Thess 1:10 as

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<sup>7</sup> The actual form in the verse in question is the aorist passive infinitive  $\text{ὀδοξασθῆναι}$ .

<sup>8</sup> This word is used a total of ten times in the OT (Ex. 14:4, 17,18; 33:16; 2 Kings 14:10; Ps. 88:8; Hag. 1:8; Is. 45:25; Ezek. 28:22; 38:23) and once in the Apocrypha (Sir. 38:6).

<sup>9</sup>  $\text{ὁ θεὸς ὀδοξαζόμενος ὁ βουλή ἁγίων μίγας...}$  (A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones).



well. For example, Feinberg concludes, "Passages like Matthew 25:31 and 2 Thessalonians 1:10 indicate that in His coming again to the earth the Lord Jesus Christ will be attended by a retinue made up of both angels and saints."<sup>10</sup> This reading has at least two arguments to commend it. First, it holds true to the authorial intent of Ps 89 (88) (as expressed by its Greek translators) to which it alludes. Second, the context mentions angels who will appear with Christ at his appearing just three verses prior (1:7), where "the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."

The problems associated with this interpretation, however, make this reading unlikely. First, while in the LXX and subsequent Jewish writings angels are often referred to as "the holy ones" (οἱ ἅγιοι), NT usage refers almost exclusively to men. As Woodward notes,

OT writers characteristically apply the title to celestial beings rather than to men. To be sure, apart from two OT books—Daniel, where the title is used eschatologically seven times, and Ps. 34:9, where the term is employed cultically—the designation occurs 16 more times in eight books and without exception refers to celestial beings. ... Surprisingly, however, NT writers characteristically—perhaps absolutely—apply the title *hoi hagioi* to men, not to celestial beings. Of 61 occurrences, only twice does it possibly refer to celestial beings (1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Lee Feinberg, "Exegetical Studies in Zechariah," *BSac* 103, no. 410 (1946): 166.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Woodward, "The Provenance Of The Term "Saints": A *Religionsgeschichtliche* Study," *JETS* 24, no. 2 (1981): 107-8. Woodward

It is interesting to note that, of the two possible NT exceptions noted by Woodward, both are from letters penned by Paul to the Thessalonians and both have strong allusions to OT texts. As has been noted, 2 Thess 1:10 alludes to Ps 89:7 (88:8) while 1 Thess 3:13 alludes to Zech 14:5.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that the vast majority of usages in the NT refers to men does not, in and of itself, determine Paul's employment of the term in this passage. For if the semantic range of οὐ ἄγιος is broad enough to include angels, then this might be the exception that breaks the rule.

### **Semantic Range of ἄγιος**

In order to determine the semantic range of ἄγιος, it is helpful to first examine the other possible exception to the standard NT usage of the word. First Thessalonians 3:13 has more to recommend a reading consistent with an angelic host than does 2 Thess 1:10. If one reads 1 Thess 3:13 as “the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his angels,” there are no problems with the immediate context. Furthermore, this reading echoes the teaching of Jesus in Matt 25:31: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory,

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provides a list of the OT usage of the title: “Exod 15:11 LXX (MT ‘majestic in holiness’); Deut 33:2; Ps 89:5, 7; Job 5:1; 15:15; Prov 9:10; 30:3; Hos 11:12; Zech 14:5; Dan 4:13, 17 23; 8:13 (twice). Psa. 16:3 and Deut 33:3 are textually corrupt and so obscure.” Woodward: 107 n. 2.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Thess 3:13 reads “at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (ὅν τῷ παρουσίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων ἀποῦ). Zech 14:5 reads “Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!” (καὶ ἔξει κύριος ὁ θεός μου καὶ πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι μετὰ αὐτοῦ).

and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.”

Evidence against such a reading includes the immediate context where Paul prays that God would establish his reader’s hearts “unblamable in holiness” (ἄμωμτους ὅν ὀγλωσῶν). Thus, there is in the text a mention of believers being holy. Referring to believers who will be coming with Christ at the Rapture,<sup>13</sup> it would be possible for the original readers to understand the term in this way. Thomas argues, “Since human beings are the objects of judgment and their holiness is what is in focus (cf. “blameless and holy”), it is entirely appropriate to identify ‘the holy ones’ as other Christian people joined with the Thessalonian Christians before the *bema* of God and Christ.”<sup>14</sup> While this is certainly not conclusive evidence, it is a factor to be considered. It is also important to note that the *Didache*, a contemporary text, understands the ὀ ὀγλωι of Zech

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<sup>13</sup> It is the Rapture of the church that appears to be in view in this verse. Paul speaks to the local believers of being ushered into the presence of God and implies some sort of judgment taking place at the time since he desires that they be found “blameless and holy” in his presence. Just a few paragraphs later Paul details the circumstances surrounding the return of Christ for his church. Therefore, it seems likely that Paul is mentioning the need for holiness in this benediction as a way of laying the groundwork for how to live pleasing to God (1 Thess 4:1-12) and the importance for doing so in light of the Rapture.

<sup>14</sup> Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *Ephesians - Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 268.

14:5, to which 1 Thess 3:13 alludes, as resurrected believers instead of the angelic host.<sup>15</sup> Finally, in Matt 25:31 Jesus does not use οἱ ἅγιοι (the holy ones) but οἱ ἄγγελοι (the angels). One must suspect that if Paul were interested in communicating Christ's teaching that he would be accompanied by an angelic host, Paul would have used the words of the Lord Jesus to eliminate any ambiguity.<sup>16</sup>

Of course it is possible that this type of ambiguity is exactly what Paul had in mind. If Paul were trying to describe the entire retinue that returns with Jesus at the Rapture without distinguishing the different groups that make up his entourage, this would be an excellent term to employ. Morris argues for this option.

It is clear from the New Testament that both angels and the departed saints will be associated with the Lord when he returns. There seems to be no reason at all why Paul should be intending to eliminate one of these classes at this

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<sup>15</sup> "And 'then shall appear the signs' of the truth. First the sign spread out in Heaven, then the sound of the trumpet, and thirdly the resurrection of the dead: but not of all the dead, but as it was said, 'The Lord shall come and all his saints with him.'" *The Didache*. 16.6-7 (Kirsopp Lake, LCL). This being said, it is possible that the author of *The Didache* based his understanding of Zech 14:5 on his understanding 1 Thess 3:13.

<sup>16</sup> Even if one accepts Matthean priority, as this author does, it is still probable that Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians before the completion and circulation of Matthew's gospel. This being said, one does not have to subscribe to source criticism to recognize that the words of Jesus most certainly were circulating through the church in some sort of oral tradition.

point. It is best to understand the “holy ones” as all those beings who will make up his train, be they angels or the saints who have gone before.<sup>17</sup>

What makes this option possible is the broad semantic range of the term οἱ ἁγιοί. The standard Greek Lexicon (BDAG) defines ἁγιος as “the quality possessed by things and persons that could approach a divinity.” Whether used as an adjective or as a substantive it may refer to both “humans and transcendent beings.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Louw and Nida define ἁγιος as, “pertaining to being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God – ‘devout, godly, dedicated.’”<sup>19</sup> Moulton and Milligan point out that the adjective ἁγιος is “common as a title of the gods.”<sup>20</sup>

According to NIDNTT, holiness is a “pre-ethical” term, both in the OT as well as in the NT.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while holiness includes an ethical component, the idea of holiness is not limited to moral behavior. Instead, moral behavior should follow

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<sup>17</sup> Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, ed. Gordon D. Fee, revised ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 112.

<sup>18</sup> It is worthy of note that BDAG lists 1 Thess 3:13 and 2 Thess 1:10 under the heading “angels” but allows “*believers, loyal followers, saints of Christians as consecrated to God*” as “also prob[able].” *Walter Bauer, BDAG, 3d ed., s,v, “ἁγιος.”*

<sup>19</sup> Johanness P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed., s,v, “ἁγιος.”

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, s,v, “ἁγιος.”

<sup>21</sup> Horst Seebass “ἁγιος” *NIDNTT*, 2:224, 230.

as a natural result of consecration to God. This understanding of holiness as “pre-ethical” is seen in the OT understanding of clean and unclean, holy and profane. “This ethic is not the first stage of human morality, but the expression of the holiness of Yahweh in a world of both similar and different sacred practices. For example, sexual intercourse is in no way immoral. But compared with sacred practices, it is a profane act which therefore makes one impure for coming into contact with the holy.”<sup>22</sup> While there is a change of emphasis in the NT, “A number of passages remain entirely within the framework of OT tradition.”<sup>23</sup> In other cases “The sacred no longer belongs to things, places or rites, but to the manifestation of life produced by the Spirit.”<sup>24</sup> This understanding is almost certainly too narrow since Matt 27:52 uses “saints” to describe OT believers coming to life. Still, “In all these cases holy means belonging to God and authorized by God.”<sup>25</sup>

Taking these definitions as a whole, it seems best to have a broad understanding of οἱ ἅγιοι as ones who have been set apart or consecrated by God to himself for his special purposes. Therefore, the lexical range of the ἅγιος is sufficient to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 224-225.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 229.

support either reading in both 1 Thess 3:13 and 2 Thess 1:10. This being the case, the *determining factor must be the presence or absence of contextual markers to indicate the referent to which the term applies.*

### **Contextual Markers associated with Πυλος**

When one begins to work through occurrences of Πυλος, it becomes immediately evident that the vast majority of usages include contextual markers which make evident the referent for the word. In fact, it is striking how often the referent to the word is immediately evident from the surrounding context.

A search of the Greek NT<sup>26</sup> was performed to find the instances of Πυλος that referred to a person, excluding the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> This search looked for the lexical form<sup>28</sup> Πυλος where it was preceded by an article which agreed with it in gender, number, and case. This article had to be within three words of Πυλος and there could not be any intervening use of the lexical form πνεμα. In order to exclude as many false hits as possible,

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<sup>26</sup> This search was performed in *Accordance* version 6.5 on an Apple Powerbook G4 running Mac OS 10.3.9. The search text was *The Greek New Testament* (Nestle-Aland, 27th Edition, second printing) Kurt Aland et al. eds., 4th rev ed., electronic version 3.0 by The GRAMCORD Institute.

<sup>27</sup> In this case it was felt that Πυλος was essentially part of his name and its use in this case was self-explanatory.

<sup>28</sup> In this case, “lexical form” is used in opposition to “inflected form.” In this search engine, a lexical search finds every instance of the word, regardless of inflection.

the search excluded instances where the lexical forms πνεῦμα and πῶλις immediately preceded the article or were within three words following ὄυλος.<sup>29</sup> This search criteria produced 90 references. A manual search of the results produced 23 false hits.<sup>30</sup> This left 67 verses employing a personal referent to ὄυλος.<sup>31</sup>

When one begins to work through this list, what is immediately evident is how often the referent is indicated in the context of the verse alone. The vast majority of the references had a direct contextual marker associated with it. These markers may be loosely categorized<sup>32</sup> as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> This author recognizes that this search might not have found every instance where ὄυλος is used to refer to a person or group of people. Nevertheless, he does feel that this search produced the vast majority of uses and is sufficient for illustrative purposes.

<sup>30</sup> For purposes of this paper, a false hit is a reference that does not include the use of ὄυλος with a personal referent.

<sup>31</sup> The corrected hit list is as follows: Matt 27:52; Mark 1:24; 8:38; Luke 1:35, 70; 4:34; 9:26; John 6:69; Acts 3:14, 21; 4:27, 30; Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10; Rom 12:13; 15:25, 26, 31; 16:2; 1 Cor 6:1, 2; 14:33; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1, 12; Eph 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:5, 18; 4:12; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2, 4, 12, 26; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; Phlm 5, 7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; 1 Pet 1:15; 3:5; 2 Pet 3:2; 1 John 2:20; Jude 3; Rev 5:8; 6:10; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 17:6; 18:20; 19:8; 22:11.

<sup>32</sup> These categories do not follow any standard nomenclature of which the author is aware. They are merely arbitrary labels used for purposes of illustration in this paper.



### Identification Markers

Fourteen references provide a direct name to the one who was called “holy.” God the Father is petitioned with the cry, “How long, O Lord, holy and true...” (Rev. 6:10). Jesus of Nazareth is called “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69), and “Thy holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:27, 30). The angel Gabriel tells Mary that “the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The “holy angels” are named twice (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Reference is made to “the holy prophets” three times individually (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; 2 Pet 3:2), and once coupled with the “holy apostles” (Eph 3:5). Finally, Peter speaks of “the holy women” of former times (1 Pet 3:5).

### Geographical Markers

Geographical markers are used nine times in the NT as pointers to the referent of ἅγιος. These markers are so self-evident that they could be listed as identification markers. They are listed separately, however, since they do not provide a direct name to the “holy ones,” but rather point to their geographical location.

The typical formula for such a marker is either “the saints in” or “the saints at” such and so location. Thus, one reads of the “saints in Jerusalem” (Rom 15:26), “the saints...in Philippi” (Phil 1:1), and of “the saints at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:13), “at Lyddia” (Acts 9:32), “at Ephesus” (Eph 1:1), and “at

Colossae” (Col 1:2). The subtle variations of this formula seems to make no difference in meaning.

At times the geographical location is fairly broad, as in “all the saints who are throughout Achaia” (2 Cor 1:1). At other times the location is quite specific, as in “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household” (Phil 4:22).

The one final reference in this category is Rom 15:25, where Paul indicates that he is “going to Jerusalem serving the saints.” In this case, the location does not follow the standard formula, but is clear nevertheless.

What is important to note in this category is that there is no ambiguity regarding the referent to οἱ ἁγιοί. The broad semantic domain of the phrase is narrowed by the immediate context.

#### Circumstantial Markers

Circumstantial markers are those indicators that point to the referent through the mention of situational evidence.<sup>33</sup> In other words, the author makes mention of conditions or state of affairs that clearly indicate the identity the “holy one(s).”

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<sup>33</sup> Since this category is so large, only a few examples will be discussed. The entire reference list for this category is as follows: Acts 3:14; 9:41; 26:10; Rom 12:13; 15:31; 16:2; 1 Cor 6:1; 14:33; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12; Eph 1:15, 18; 2:19; 3:18; 4:12; 6:18; Col 1:4, 26; Phlm 5, 7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; 1 Pet 1:15; 1 John 2:20; Jude 3; Rev 5:8; 8:3, 4; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 17:6; 19: 8; 22:11.

In some cases, the textual marker points to a historical circumstance for identification. In Acts 3:14, Jesus is referred to as “the Holy One” without an explicit mention of his name. Peter preaches, “you disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.” While there is no overt mention of his name, the context clearly refers to the trial of Jesus and the release of Barabbas. Paul also uses an historical situation to identify the referent of “saints” in Acts 9:41 stating that he locked up “many of the saints in prison,” clearly referencing his reign of terror as Saul of Tarsus. It should be noted that historical references may also reference the entire body of NT believers as a group. Jude’s reference (3) concerning the “faith once for all delivered to the saints” is an example.

Most references in this category refer to the church age believers alive at the time. Paul mentions the “churches of the saints” in 1 Cor 14:33, clearly indicating church age believers as the referent.<sup>34</sup> He commends the Ephesian (Eph 1:15) and Colossian (Col 1:4) believers for their “love for all the saints.” Philemon (7) is lauded “because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.” Paul also uses the term

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<sup>34</sup> Actually this reference could also be considered as having either a location marker or an identification marker, since the saints inhabit the church (location) and are known by their association with the church (identification). As one works his way through these references, it becomes evident that these admittedly arbitrary categories are not always clear-cut.

whenever he discusses the collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15:31; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12).

One should note that occasionally the textual marker requires at least some theological pre-understanding for the marker to be recognized. For example, Rev 19:8 refers to the fine linen given to the bride of the Lamb as “the righteous acts of the saints.” A new believer approaching the text for the first time might find this reference inscrutable. Is John speaking of OT believers, the church, or tribulation saints? When one understands, however, that the Lamb is Jesus Christ and bride of Christ is the church, the referent becomes clear.

Again, in each reference, there is no ambiguity regarding the referent to οἱ ὄγιοι. The immediate context provides sufficient information to make identification immediate.

#### Ambiguous citations

While the vast majority of references have clearly marked referents, there are at least six references that are ambiguous with regard to the referent.<sup>35</sup> It is important to note what is, and is not, being said at this point. This author does not contend that the referent of ὄγιος is so obscure that it is beyond searching out. Rather it is his conclusion that the immediate context does not provide sufficient information to make such an identification quickly and easily.

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<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor 6:2; Col 1:12; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; Rev 11:18; 18:20.

It is interesting to note that each reference in this category shares a common characteristic. Each speaks of a future event.

Paul informs the Corinthian believers that “the saints will judge the world” (1 Cor 6:2). He indicates that they will be among these holy ones by stating that “you” will judge the world in the next sentence. So there is a marker indicating at least some of the participants in this judicial assemblage. What is unclear in the immediate context is whether or not the οἱ Ἅγιοι is limited to church age believers or whether OT saints will participate in this kingdom function. Similarly, Paul tells the Colossian believers that the Father has “qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). The extent of that inheritance, that is whether or not this blessing is for OT saints as well as NT ones, is not mentioned in the immediate context. The same is true for John’s use of the term in Rev 11:18 and 18:20.

Again, it must be stressed that all that is being discussed under this heading is whether or not there is a clear textual marker *in the immediate context* which narrows the scope of οἱ Ἅγιοι sufficiently to identify the referent. Comparing these references across authors and time sheds considerably more light on exactly who is being discussed.

For example, while 1 Cor 6:2 does not provide sufficient information in the immediate context, further investigation

proves enlightening. Daniel foretells how “the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom” (Dan 7:22). Taking possession evidently includes the re-establishment of the judges, since God promised through the prophet Isaiah, “Then I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city” (Isa 1:26). Jesus elaborates on this promise, explaining to his disciples that “in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28). Thus, when one expands the scope of investigation beyond the immediate context, it becomes clear that οἱ ἅγιοι in 1 Cor 6:2 may refer to both OT and NT saints, or possibly only to NT saints fulfilling an OT role.

### **Contextual Markers in 2 Thess 1:10**

When one understands the broad semantic range of “holy ones” in the NT and the common use of contextual markers to narrow the referent, Morris’ broader understanding of οἱ ἅγιοι to include both angels and departed saints in 1 Thess 3:13 seems best. For there are no clear contextual markers to indicate a more narrow referent and this broader understanding is keeping with the clear teaching of Jesus in Matt 25:31.

When one considers 2 Thess 1:10, however, it becomes evident that there are markers in the immediate context that seem to make a similarly broad reading unlikely. The context of 2 Thess 1:10 does include a mention of angels accompanying Christ at the Parousia in verse 7. As has been noted above, this is an element in favor of taking angels as the referent to τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ in 1:10. This factor is countered, however, by the parallel constructions Paul employs in verses 8 and 10.

In 1:8 the phrase “those who do not know God” (τοῖς μὴ ἐπίδοσιν θεῶν) is parallel to the phrase “those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ) with the two phrases being connected by καί. Similarly, in 1:10 the prepositional phrase “in His saints on that day” (ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ) is parallel to “among all who have believed” (ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). These two prepositional phrases in 1:10 are actually contained within two separate yet parallel infinitival purpose clauses. Thus, there are two parallel constructions—one in verse 8 and one in verse 10—that are also parallel to one another. In other words, these parallel constructions indicate three separate relationships in the larger context. First, there is the relationship between the two descriptions of those who will suffer retribution in verse 8. Second, there is the relationship between those who will be among the blessed in verse 10. Finally, there is the relationship between those who suffer retribution in verse 8 and

those who will be blessed in verse 10. It is this last relationship that casts doubt upon taking οἱ ἅγιοι as angels. For it is difficult to see how a parallel structure consisting of two groups of men could be in parallel to yet another parallel structure consisting of both men and angels.<sup>36</sup> In other words, if one were to take οἱ ἅγιοι in 1:10 to be angels, then it seems one would have to deny the obvious parallelism of the passage.

### Conclusion

The reading which holds there are two groups mentioned in 2 Thess 1:10 – one consisting of angels and the other of men – has at least three arguments to commend it. First, it holds true to the authorial intent of Ps 89 (88) (as expressed by its Greek translators) to which it alludes. Second, the context mentions angels who will appear with Christ at his appearing just three verses prior (1:7), where “the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.”<sup>37</sup> Third, the

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<sup>36</sup> If the only parallel relationship in the passage were in 1:10, then this association would have little impact upon limiting the referent since the relationship indicated by the parallel structure would be that both groups are attendant at the Parousia. It is when one adds the other parallel relationships, however, that this position becomes more difficult to defend.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas contends that the use of ἁγῶν in verse 1:7 argues against taking τοῖς ἁγίοις as referring to angels due to the change in vocabulary. This argument is persuasive if one were taking “saints” to refer exclusively to angels. This does not address, however, the possibility that οἱ ἅγιοι could be referring to the entire company of “holy ones” (i.e. angelic beings



semantic range of οἱ ἄγγελοι is sufficient to support such a reading.

This being said, it has been shown that οἱ ἄγγελοι often requires some contextual marker to indicate the proper referent. In the case of 2 Thess 1:10, one such contextual marker seems to be the parallel structure of the passage. When this structure is considered, the reading advocating two groups consisting of men and angels seems unlikely.

### **One Group: Church Age Believers**

While this author is not convinced that the parallelism in 1:10 requires (by itself) two human referents, this parallelism is the main justification for concluding that that infinitival purpose clauses in 1:10 have, not only two human referents, but also that both of these human referents are in fact one and the same. This understanding of identical referents seems to be the view of the majority of commentators.

Some merely assert the referents as identical without justification. Ryrie, for example, states:

Two very amazing statements are contained in verse 10. First, when He comes He will be glorified *in* (not *by*) His saints ... . In other words, Paul is making the astounding claim that the glory of the Lord will be mirrored in

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and justified men) who accompany Christ at the Parousia. Thomas, 315 n. 10. This option is not address by Thomas since he takes 1:10 to refer to the Rapture of the church while continuing to hold to 1:8 as referring to the Parousia. Thomas, 314. The primary difficulty with this position is that it ignores the parallelism between 1:8 and 1:10.

believers (cf. John 17:1; Eph 2:7). ... Second, Christ at His coming will be admired or breath-takingly wondered at in those who believe. Again, Christians are stated to be the ones who bring admiration to the Lord on the part of those who witness His return.<sup>38</sup>

Morris echoes similar sentiments, again without argumentation. “When this takes place, it will be in order that (the construction expresses purpose) he may be glorified in his saints (or “holy people,” as *NIV* puts it). This, of course, refers to all believers, those set apart for the service of the Lord.”<sup>39</sup> Calvin as well simply assumes the referents as identical. “It is also to be observed, that after having made use of the term *saints*, he adds, by way of explanation – *those that believe*, by which he intimates that there is no holiness in men without faith, but that all are profane.”<sup>40</sup>

Others, however, make it plain that the parallelism in 1:10 is the main justification for taking the single referent

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Ryrie, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 95–96. Interestingly, Ryrie’s mentor, friend, and fellow dispensationalist, John Walvoord, leaves open the possibility of a broader referent for οἱ Ἅγιοι. “When He comes back He will be accompanied by the saints. The event will be such a tremendous spectacle that it will impel worship and admiration on the part of all who believe. ... This will be true not only of the church, which is with Christ as his bride, but it will be true of all others who might be comprehended in the term *saints*.” John F. Walvoord, *The Thessalonian Epistles* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1955), 110.

<sup>39</sup> Morris, 206.

<sup>40</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 319. Calvin’s understanding of the passage should come as no surprise as it seems to be merely an outworking of his theology.

position. F. F. Bruce, for example, writes, “While the ὄγιοι here might be the angels of v 7, the parallelism between this ἰνδοξασθῆναι clause and the following θαυμασθῆναι clause strongly suggests the identity of the ὄγιοι and the πιστεῖσαντες.”<sup>41</sup> Bruce then continues his argument with a quick review of how believers are called “holy ones” throughout the NT. Ellicott, while not specifically mentioning the parallelism, contrasts the context of 2 Thess 1:10 with 1 Thess 3:13, noting, “the ὄγιοι do not here appear to refer to the Holy angels, but, as the tacit contrasts and limitations of the context suggest, to the risen and glorified company of believers; contrast I Thess. iii. 13, where πάντες, and the absence of all notice of the unholy, suggest the more inclusive reference.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly Best maintains, “Though in Ps. 88 the reference is to angels it is almost certainly here to believers because of the parallelism of the two phrases and because the earlier contrast of persecutors and persecuted now demands a reference to the latter.”<sup>43</sup> Likewise Green argues for angels in 1 Thess 3:13 but

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<sup>41</sup> F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 45 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 152.

<sup>42</sup> Charles John Ellicott, *Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, Classic Commentary Library, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957; reprint, Parker and Son), 102 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>43</sup> Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 265.

finds the parallelism in 2 Thess 1:10 persuasive. “The ‘saints’ in 1 Thessalonians 3.13 are the angels who will accompany the Lord in his coming ... , but here the reference is rather to the believers ... , as the parallelism with the second part of the verse implies (those who have believed).”<sup>44</sup>

While this view seems likely at first blush, further investigation shows that it has at least two unstated, yet related problems associated with it. First, as Wanamaker points out, “The repeated use of synonymous parallelism in vv. 7b-10 is not typical of Paul’s normal epistolary style.”<sup>45</sup> Best also notices this unusual aspect of the passage. “Various suggestions have been made about the origin of vv. 6-10 in view of their rhythmic structure, especially the number of parallelisms reminiscent of Semitic poetry.”<sup>46</sup> The question that this information raises is simply this: How does one know that this is *synonymous* parallelism? The parallel structure of the passage

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<sup>44</sup> Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 294.

<sup>45</sup> Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 232.

<sup>46</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 266-267. Both Best and Wanamaker contend that this atypical use of parallelism indicates that this section consists of a preformed unit that was inserted by Paul. Best argues that Paul himself is the author (Best, *Thessalonians*, 267.). Wanamaker, in contrast, does not comment on the authorship, but insists that this was in fact pre-formed material (Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 232.).

is difficult to deny. But the presence of parallelism does not automatically make the parallelism synonymous.

The second problem is related to the first. What exactly is meant when one uses the phrase “synonymous parallelism?” What level of correspondence is necessary for this title to fit? In fact, is there really such a thing as synonymous parallelism?

#### Excursus on Synonymous Parallelism

At this point some might wonder at the wisdom of questioning the existence of such an obvious feature of Biblical literature. After all, this aspect of grammatical structure seems to be one of the most obvious features of poetic lines. So it seems best to begin this discussion with Alter’s comment concerning the self-evident nature of Hebrew poetry.

The incorrigible naïveté of common sense might lead one to suppose that the rudiments of an answer would be self-evident, but in fact there is no aspect of biblical literature that has elicited more contradictory, convoluted, and at times quite fantastical views, from late antiquity to the latest scholarly publications. To many it might have seemed that after Robert Lowth’s *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) semantic parallelism between the two (or sometimes three) components of a line was firmly established as the chief organizing principle of the system; but questions have been raised about the actual prevalence of such parallelism, about how it is to be conceived if it is really there, and about whether it might not be an entirely secondary feature of biblical poetry.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 3. Alter goes on to demonstrate the wide differences of opinion concerning parallelism in the Bible. “The dismaying range of discussion on this topic is vividly illustrated by two extremes. At one end of the

Suzuki postulates that there are three fundamental problems with the concept of synonymous parallelism that can be seen through a taxonomical analysis of the semantic structure of Hebrew poetry. These problems are “ambiguity, tautology in investigational methodology, and lack of explanatory value.”<sup>48</sup> Each of these problems will be investigated in turn.

### **Ambiguity**

If semantic parallelism is really a component of Biblical poetry (and this author holds that it is), then how should it be defined? Yoder’s understanding seems to represent the standard view.

As one reads this poetry he will notice that sometimes the thought of the second line is in agreement with that of the first line. ... This is known as synonymous parallelism. If, however, the thought of the second line is in contrast with that of the first, it is known as antithetic

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spectrum, an Orientalist in the 1930s, Paul Kraus, set out to show that the entire Hebrew Bible, once properly accented, could be demonstrated to have been written in verse (a project in which he had been anticipated three decades earlier by the German Old Testament scholar Eduard Sievers). When he discovered two-thirds of the way through his analysis that the texts no longer bore out his thesis, he took his own life. At the other end of the spectrum, an ambitious recent study, James L. Kugle’s *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, after a splendid first chapter full of incisive comments on what happens in semantic parallelism, comes perilously close to concluding that there is no poetry in the Bible, only a ‘continuum’ from loosely parallelistic structures in what we think of as the prose sections to a more ‘heightened rhetoric’ of parallelistic devices in what we misleadingly label verse.” Alter, *Poetry*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Jo Suzuki, “Synonymous Fallacy in Hebrew Poetic Studies,” paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Far West Regional, San Bernadino, CA, April 15, 1988, 10.

parallelism. ... When the thought of the second line does not agree with the thought of the first line nor is in contrast with it but builds it up or completes it, the arrangement is called synthetic parallelism.<sup>49</sup>

While this explanation has the virtue of being succinct, it leaves many questions unanswered. Murphy's expansion upon this definition is helpful since it addresses the issue of differences in the supposedly synonymous lines.

[Parallelism] refers to the grouping of lines or half lines in such a way that the full thought of the writer is presented. There are various degrees of association between the two (sometimes three) units. Even when the lines seem to repeat one another (often termed synonymous parallelism), they are not quite synonymous. The relationship can be one of intensification or sharper focusing. Thus, if A, then more so B. ... In the case of antithetic parallelism, a certain opposition is evident, even though the same general idea is expressed<sup>50</sup>

The problem raised by this definition is the ambiguity of the phrase "not quite synonymous." Suzuki points out that "the only true synonymous parallelism will be word-for-word repetition. If some semantic differences are allowed, then an unanswerable question will arise: 'How synonymous do the lines have to be in order to qualify for synonymous parallelism?'"<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sanford Calvin Yoder, *Poetry of the Old Testament* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1948), 10.

<sup>50</sup> Roland Edmund Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible reference library (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 6.

<sup>51</sup> Suzuki, "Synonymous Fallacy," 10-11.

Thus, O'Connor writes, "Parallelism cannot cover the field of Hebrew poetry unless it is not only left undefined, but allowed to cover so many phenomena that it is undefinable."<sup>52</sup> This fundamental ambiguity makes any definition of the term "synonymous parallelism" practically meaningless. As a result, O'Connor concludes that the term simply cannot be defined.<sup>53</sup>

This lack of an adequate definition raises another problem. Most parallelism is concerned primarily with the ideas of the paired lines, not with the words themselves.

The reason that no adequate nomenclature has been developed for parallelism is because of a fundamental error committed by Lowth in innocence and perpetuated unthinkingly since. In almost all cases in which parallelism is defined, scholars define it in relation to non-verbal realities. ... This would be suitable in the description of non-verbal poems; there are none. A poem is made up of words; to describe a construct of words, terminology which refers to words must be used.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the working model upon which the standard understanding of synonymous parallelism is based does not exist.

As a result, there is an equivocation within the popular understanding of synonymous parallelism. The standard definitions refer to paired syntactical lines and parallel

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<sup>52</sup> Michael Patrick O'Connor, "Hebrew verse structure" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Eisenbrauns, University of Michigan, 1978., 1980), 51.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 51.



ideas. In practice, however, the individual words are the primary focus. Thus, what is being spoken of as “synonymous” has changed. Consequently, while the definition speaks of syntax and ideas, the praxis is concerned with making the paired words synonymous. Suzuki correctly notes, “There is no empirical evidence to support the conclusion that the Hebrew poet was obligated to use semantically equivalent words in syntactically parallel elements.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, while lines of poems may be paired with regard to structure, there is no necessary equivalence between the words of the paired lines. A particular word does not automatically become parallel in meaning with the corresponding word in the parallel clause.

### **Tautology in Investigational Methodology**

The issue of tautology stems from the problem immediately previous. Without an adequate definition of synonymous parallelism, one lacks an objective means of identifying when it is employed. This leads to the following circular argument:

Premise – synonymous parallelism is where the meaning of the subsequent lines repeats the meaning of the first line.

Premise – This text is an example of synonymous parallelism.

Q.E.D. – The meaning of the subsequent lines in this text repeat the meaning of the first line.

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<sup>55</sup> Suzuki, “Synonymous Fallacy,” 4.

The circularity of this argument is seen in the second premise.<sup>56</sup> In order to define a text “synonymous parallelism,” one must assume the conclusion, namely that the subsequent lines of the text repeat the meaning of the first line. Suzuki indicates how this circularity works out in practice. “When one classifies a certain text as synonymous parallelism, he does so because ‘both lines mean the same thing.’ But when he analyzes the semantic content of the same text, he will treat it as a mere repetition, because ‘it is a synonymous parallelism.’”<sup>57</sup>

It is certainly an overstatement to suggest that all commentators who appeal to synonymous parallelism base their entire exegesis upon such narrow circularity. It is nevertheless unfortunate that some do. Notice, for example, how Bruce assumes the parallelism from which he draws his conclusions: “While the ἄγγελοι here might be the angels of v 7, the parallelism between this ἠκούσαντες clause and the following θαυμάσαντες clause strongly suggests the identity of the ἄγγελοι and the πιστεύσαντες.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Hiebert opines, “The parallelism with *believed* in the following clause makes it clear that ‘his

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<sup>56</sup> Restating the argument so that the current second premise is the conclusion and the current conclusion the second premise makes little difference on the circularity of this argument.

<sup>57</sup> Suzuki, “Synonymous Fallacy,” 11.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 152.

saints' (*tois hagiois autou*), 'his holy ones,' are redeemed men, not angels."<sup>59</sup> Best also argues this way.

Though in Ps. 88 the reference is to angels, it is almost certainly here to believers because of the parallelism of the two phrases and because the earlier contrast of persecutors and persecuted now demands a reference to the latter; saints ('holy ones') has both meanings ...; the parallelism also excludes any idea that Paul has Jewish and Gentile Christians in mind in the two clauses...<sup>60</sup>

What makes these examples noteworthy is their reliance upon synonymous parallelism as their primary interpretive grid, despite the (apparently unnoticed) circularity of their arguments.

### **Lack of Explanatory Value**

As might be expected, the lack of explanatory value stems from the previous two complications. Since there is a lack of an adequate definition (and therefore a corresponding lack of understanding of what constitutes synonymous parallelism), and since the application of this poetic device rests on a tautology, then it should come as no surprise that the actual employment of this classification obscures the potential subtleties in a given text. As Suzuki points out,

The term "synonymous" has an inherent tendency to focus one's attention on similarities without taking

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<sup>59</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thessalonian Epistles: A Call to Readiness* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 293.

<sup>60</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 265.

differences in[to] consideration. Thus, in practice, a list of synonymous parallelisms is created on the basis of similarities only. As soon as one perceives a similarity between two lines, no matter what degree of similarity (or difference) it has, the text is labeled as synonymous.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, what often happens is that the potential subtleties that distinguish the two lines are ignored or are attributed to purely aesthetic concerns. This means that the complex semantic relationships that exist between parallel lines tend to be dismissed. Additionally, any evidence contrary to synonymy either remains unseen or is ignored.

### **Conclusion**

There is no denying that phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs can exhibit parallel structures. Grammatically similar word groups are an established feature of Biblical literature. These similar constructions should not be ignored. In fact, this author considers the structural parallelism of 2 Thess 1 to be key to its interpretation.

This being said, it must be remembered that structural parallelism is not the same as semantic parallelism. In other words, while phrases may have similar structures, the actual words used have different semantic values. Therefore, reliance upon synonymous parallelism as an interpretive device seems unwise. The lack of definition, the inherent tautology in the investigative method and the obscuring of the subtle differences

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<sup>61</sup> Suzuki, "Synonymous Fallacy," 11.

between the lines makes dependence upon this poetic convention ill-advised.

#### Grammatical Evidence against the One Group View

One of the most overlooked aspects of this passage is the repetition of the article in the second phrase of the parallel constructions. This repeated article can be found in 2 Thess 1:6-7, 8 and 10.

...ὄντα ποδοῦναι τοῖς θλιβουσιν ἰμῶς θλιψιν καὶ ἰμὼν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ὄνεσιν μεθ' ἰμῶν (1:6-7)

...τοῖς μὴ ἐδόξιν θεῶν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ἠπακοῦουσιν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ κυρίου ἰμῶν Ἰησοῦ (1:8)

...ὃν τοῖς ἠγροῖς ἀπτοῦ καὶ θαυμασθῆναι ὃν πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεῦσασιν... (1:10)

When one considers the use of the article with the conjunction καὶ, the most familiar discussion involves the absence of the second article. Granville Sharp's famous rule states:

When the copulative καὶ connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connexion, (sic) and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill,] if the article ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person

that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle.<sup>62</sup>

What is less familiar is any discussion dealing with a repeated article in the same construction. Sharp's rule does not address this issue in any way. An investigation into the subject, however, indicates substantial evidence that the repeated article is used to distinguish between different persons.

### Review of Literature

A review of common Greek reference works shows that, while some do not comment on a repeated article following καί,<sup>63</sup> in those that do comment there is near universal understanding that the repeated article differentiates between two different groups or persons. For example, Blass and Debrunner state,

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<sup>62</sup> Granville Sharp, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament: Containing many New Proofs of the Divinity of Christ, from Passages which are wrongly Translated in the Common English Version*, 1st American ed. from the 3d London ed. (Philadelphia: Hopkins, 1807), 3. After stating this rule, Sharp explained and expanded the parameters of this rule. According to Sharp, the construction *article-substantive-καί-substantive* must meet four requirements in order for both substantives to point to the same referent. The substantives must (1) be personal, (2) be singular, (3) be common (not proper) and, (4) agree in gender and case. For a more complete discussion see Bruce A. Baker, "Granville Sharp's Rule," *The Journal of Ministry & Theology* 1, no. 2 (1997).

<sup>63</sup> See for instance William D. Mounce, *Basics of biblical Greek: grammar* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1993), Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996).

With two or more substantives connected by καὶ the article can be carried over from the first to the others especially if the gender and number are the same, but also occasionally when the gender is different... On the other hand, there are cases where the repetition of the article with the same gender or number is necessary or more appropriate.<sup>64</sup>

Those occasions where the repeated article is “necessary or more appropriate” include Acts 26:30 (οἱ βασιλεῖς καὶ οἱ ὄντες) since the phrase refers to “different persons.”<sup>65</sup>

Robertson agrees, arguing that when the author wishes to distinguish between two subjects, he repeats the article. In support of this view, Robertson lists eighteen references (including 2 Thess 1:8) and states that the list “can be extended almost indefinitely.”<sup>66</sup>

Likewise Turner contends that “for practical purposes in class. Greek the repetition of the art. was not strictly necessary to ensure that the items be considered separately.” Nevertheless, “the art. could have been repeated to avoid misunderstanding if separate individuals had been intended.” In

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<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk ([Chicago]: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 144-45.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>66</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament; in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 786-87.

fact, “Often the repetition, even with nouns of the same gender, does indeed indicate that two distinct subjects are involved.”<sup>67</sup>

Young declares, “When two nouns are separated by  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  and each noun has its own article, the author intends a distinction between them. When the two nouns are separated by a  $\kappa\alpha\iota$  and only the first has the article, the author intends of the reader to group the two nouns together in some fashion.”<sup>68</sup>

In the interest of fairness, it should be noted that not everyone holds this view. This author has found that no one who discussed the construction in question disagreed with the conclusions presented. Still, Moule’s general warning seems relevant: “It is sometimes claimed that an important theological issue is involved in the use or non-use of the article—e.g. with  $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\delta\mu\alpha$ ; but each instance needs to be discussed on its own merits, and in some instances it is hard to avoid the impression that usages is arbitrary.”<sup>69</sup> It seems best, therefore to conduct a limited investigation to see if the majority opinion may be corroborated.

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<sup>67</sup> James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, vol. 3, Syntax*, by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963; reprint, 1998), 181.

<sup>68</sup> Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 62.

<sup>69</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2d ed. (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1959), 111-12.



## Empirical Investigation

When a search was conducted which looked for the same grammatical construction as that in 2 Thess 1:10,<sup>70</sup> only one instance was found: 2 Cor 5:8 (ὄκδημῶσαι ὄκ τοῦ σῶματος καὶ ὄνδημῶσαι πρὸς τὸν κῆριον - to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord).

It is instructive to note that in this verse – also written by Paul – the same construction is used to discuss two different, yet related, situations. In the context it is clear that Paul considers the first event (being absent from the body) to be logically prior to the second (being at home with the Lord). The fact that these two events are linked is evident by the use of the conjunction καὶ.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, it is also true that each phrase is describing an unique situation. In other words, being absent from the body is not the same as being at

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<sup>70</sup> The following search was conducted in *Accordance*: an infinitive followed by a preposition followed within two words by an article that agrees in case with the preposition. The article must be followed (within two words) by either an adjective, participle, or noun that agrees in gender, number and case with the preceding article. This phrase must be within two words of καὶ with no verb in between. Immediately following the καὶ there must be an infinitive (that agrees in tense and voice with the preceding infinitive) followed by a preposition - article combination that agree in case and are within two words of one another. The article must be followed by either an adjective, participle, or noun that is within two words of the article and agrees in gender, number, and case.

<sup>71</sup> This should, of course, be expected whenever καὶ is used. The purpose of the conjunction is to link together two phrases because of some commonality. Therefore, one should not expect two phrases joined by καὶ to share nothing in common whatsoever.

home with the Lord. Many are the unfortunate souls that are absent from the body but also absent from the Lord. Thus, it appears that the repetition of the second article distinguishes between two separate persons or events, at least in this particular construction.

The fact that Paul uses this distinctive structure in another passage to differentiate between discrete events is informative, but certainly not conclusive. The question must be asked if Paul uses a repeated second article to distinguish between entities in simpler and more numerous constructions. More specifically, what about the construction that Paul uses in 2 Thess 1:8? As has been noted before, verse 10 has a parallel construction that corresponds to the parallel construction in verse 8. Therefore, one would expect both verses to speak of either one or two groups simultaneously. One would not expect to see verse 8 referring to only one group of people while verse 10 speaks of two.

Therefore, another *Accordance* search was conducted to find the construction *article-participle-καὶ-article-participle* in the Pauline corpus.<sup>72</sup> This search produced two hits: 1 Cor 3:8 and 2 Thess 1:8.

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<sup>72</sup> The actual search construction was as follows: an article followed (within 2 words) by a participle that agrees with the article in gender, number, and case, followed by *καὶ*, followed by an article-participle combination identical to that prior to the *καὶ*. The participles must agree with each other in gender, number, and case.

In 1 Cor 3:8 one once again finds the repeated article distinguishing between two persons and two activities: the one who plants and the one who waters (ὁ φυτεῶν δὲ καὶ ὁ ποτιζῶν). Once again a parallel construction in the Pauline corpus backs up a reading of the repeated article as distinguishing between two groups.<sup>73</sup>

When one expands the search parameters to include the whole of the NT, twelve hits are returned: Matt 21:9; Mark 1:32; 6:31; 11:9, 15; Luke 12:35; John 21:24; 1 Cor 3:8; 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 12:12; Rev 2:26; 4:8. An examination of these verses reveals that in six of these cases the repeated article is used to differentiate between two entities, two instances are examples of merismus, three refer to different aspects of the same person, and one is in question (2 Thess 1:8).

Those references that show a distinction between two entities are as follows. Matthew 21:9 and Mark 11:9 both record two different crowds, one went before Jesus and one that followed behind. Mark 1:32 speaks of two types of people seeking

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<sup>73</sup> It must be mentioned that a cursory reading of this text might cause some to come to a different conclusion, since Paul makes it clear that the one who plants and the one who waters “are one.” The context, however, makes it clear that these are actually two different persons. In verse six, Paul writes, “I planted, Apollos watered,” indicating the identity of the two parties in the immediate discussion. Additionally, the use of the phrase “but each will receive his own reward” (ὁκάστος δὲ τὸν ἰδίον μισθὸν λαμβύεται) in verse eight indicates that Paul is referring to separate parties, not one individual. The NIV’s “have one purpose,” NEB’s “work as a team with the same purpose,” or Net Bible’s “work as one,” correctly capture the sense.

healing: those who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. First Corinthians 3:8 has already been discussed but fits into this category. Hebrews 12:12 uses the second article to distinguish between “hands that are weak and knees that are feeble.”<sup>74</sup> Finally, repeated article in Luke 12:35 has the effect of distributing the force of the imperative  $\text{ἵνα ἔσθε ἕτοιμοι}$  into two commands: “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight.” These two commands rightly are assigned to the same person, but they are two separate actions that are distinct from one another.

In two of the references – Mark 6:31 and 11:15 – one finds the repeated article as part of a merism.<sup>75</sup> Mark 6:31 speaks of people “coming and going.” The picture here is not of one discrete crowd coming while another was leaving. Instead, it is used to picture a large crowd milling about. Likewise in Mark 11:15 Jesus began to cast out those “who were buying and

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<sup>74</sup> The context of Heb 12:12 shows that the athletic imagery used here probably refers to the same person. It seems likely that the weak hands and feeble knees are pictures of total exhaustion. Still, what is important for this study is that the two items being separated are not one and the same. In other words, while these conditions may exist on just one person, hands are not knees and knees are not hands. The repetition of the article is used to separate unlike items.

<sup>75</sup> “A synecdoche is the substituting of a part of something for the whole or the whole for the part. ... A merism is a form of synecdoche in which the totality or whole is substituted by two contrasting or opposite parts. When the psalmists wrote, ‘You know when I sit and when I rise’ (Ps. 139:2), he was not limiting the Lord’s knowledge to times when he sat down and when he got up. Instead he was saying the Lord knew all his actions.” Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (United States: Victor Books, 1991), 151.

selling” in the temple. Once again, while these are two separate actions, both were probably being done by the same merchants. What is important to note in these two verses is that, while the merism makes no distinction between the person performing the actions, the actions are separate and distinguishable.

The three instances where this grammatical construction is being used to describe the same person have two aspects in common. First, all three were penned by the Apostle John: John 21:24; Rev 2:26; and 4:8. Second, *in each case there is a contextual marker to signify that each phrase refers to the same person.* In John 21:24, it is clear that “he who bears witness” and “he who wrote these things” are the same person because the text plainly states, “This is the disciple.” Likewise, in Rev 4:8 the context is equally clear: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ὢς καὶ ὁ ἔρχόμενος). Again, in Rev 2:26, there is a textual marker identifying the ones in question. Unlike the previous two references, this contextual marker is several verses away. Nevertheless, the larger context makes it clear that Jesus is speaking immediately to the believers at the church in Thyatira and ultimately to the church at large in this age.

It is acknowledged that the test passages in this section have been limited to the exact construction of 2 Thess 1:8 and that more investigation needs to be done with regard to the

repetition of the article in two substantival phrases joined by καί. Nevertheless, it seems that the data examined points to the following conclusion: *the default reading of the article-participle-καί-article-participle phrase should make a distinction between the referents of the participles unless it is clear that the phrase is a merism or there is some other obvious contextual reason to assign both participles to the same referent.*

#### Grammatical Evidence v. Synonymous Parallelism

Even though 1) the concept of synonymous parallelism is fraught with problems, and 2) the grammatical evidence for distinguishing the referents in parallel constructions with a repeated article is substantial, when the two approaches are pitted against one another, synonymous parallelism is usually (but not always) the winner.

For example, I. Howard Marshall takes an unusual hybrid position arguing for two distinct groups in 1:8 but only one group in 1:10. Referring to verse 8 he argues, “The Greek construction shows that two groups of people are being listed, but there is considerable uncertainty regarding the identify [sic] of the persons mentioned.”<sup>76</sup> After listing several options, he finally concludes,

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<sup>76</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 178.

Two groups should be distinguished. Paul refers, first, to the Gentiles, describing them in traditional Jewish terms as people who are ignorant of God, and he sees in this ignorance the cause of their attacks on Christians. Then, second, he includes the Jews who have some knowledge of God, but who have refused to believe and obey the good news of our Lord Jesus, i.e., the good news that Jesus is the one exalted by God as Lord.<sup>77</sup>

While Marshall is to be commended for including the grammatical structure of 1:8 in his exegesis, inexplicably he fails to take the repetition of the article in 1:10 into account. "The passage makes it clear that the **saints** are those who **have believed** (the aorist is used of their initial act of faith, or perhaps it looks back from time of the Parousia to their earlier commitment to Jesus). No distinction between the two groups (e.g. between Jewish and Gentile believers) is intended."<sup>78</sup> Marshall provides no explanation for acknowledging the repeated article in verse 8 while discounting its significance in verse 10. One suspects that his interpretation of 1:10 could be based upon his *a priori* commitment to their being only one people of God.

Wanamaker takes issue with Marshall's analysis, but does not address the central issue. For Marshall, there are really two questions that must be answered. First, is there one group or two? Second, if there are indeed two groups, who are they?

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 181.

Wanamaker addresses the second question while ignoring the first. He argues against Marshall's designation of the two groups on exegetical grounds while he asserts, without argumentation, the priority of synonymous parallelism. He writes that "'those not knowing God' and 'those not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus' form a synonymous parallelism."<sup>79</sup> In fact, Wanamaker argues that verses 7-10 were not originally penned by Paul, but were actually a pre-formed unit that Paul has inserted into his argument. "The repeated use of synonymous parallelism in vv. 7b-10 is not typical of Paul's normal epistolary style. This evidence argues forcefully that the material in vv. 7b-10 existed prior to its inclusion in 2 Thessalonians 1, though it is not possible to determine in what form it originally existed or whether it originated with Paul."<sup>80</sup>

This interpretation is flawed at several points. First, Wanamaker fails to address the grammatical issue that Marshall raises. Second, he assumes synonymous parallelism without argumentation or proof. Finally, he assumes a source document that is neither extant, necessary, or alluded to in the text. Again one must wonder if it is not *a priori* theological assumptions that influence his exegesis rather than grammatical or contextual concerns.

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<sup>79</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 227.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.



## Conclusion

As has been stated, the view that both lines of the parallel structure in 2 Thess 1:10 refers to church age believers has two significant problems.

First, while some merely assume this view without offering any proof, those who offer proof almost exclusively rely on synonymous parallelism for justification of their position. What this section has attempted to show is that the conventional wisdom regarding synonymous parallelism does not stand up to investigation. The lack of a definition for synonymous parallelism coupled with the innate tautology in the investigative method results in an obscuring of the subtle variations that exist between the two lines.

Second, the view virtually ignores the grammatical significance of the repeated article in the second line. The grammars that address this construction seem to be unanimous in their understanding that the repetition of the article signifies two distinct subjects. A limited investigation of similarly constructed phrases in the NT has shown these grammars to be largely correct.

Therefore, unless there is some grammatical or contextual evidence that has been overlooked, the one-group view regarding 2 Thess 1:10 cannot be correct. Another solution must be found.

PROPOSED INTERPRETATION: OT SAINTS & NT SAINTS

If grammatical considerations argue for two separate groups in 2 Thess 1:8 & 10, the question raised by Marshall is appropriate. To whom do these references refer?

Marshall assigns the phrase “those who do not know God” in 1:8 to Gentiles. He points out that this is a standard OT way to refer to Gentiles noting Ps 79:6 and Jer 10:25 as examples. He also refers to 1 Thess 4:5 as an example of Paul using this phrase in a similar fashion. The second phrase—“those who do not obey the gospel”—refers to Jews. He cites Isa 66:4, Acts 6:7, and Rom 10:16 as evidence.<sup>81</sup>

Wanamaker, however, is correct in stating that this interpretation has a “major problem.”

For Paul the second phrase<sup>82</sup> applies equally to Gentiles and Jews, as Rom. 11:30–32 demonstrates. Moreover, the Jewish people are frequently described in the OT (cf. Je. 4:22; 9:3, 6; Ho. 5:4) as not knowing God. For this reason it is unwise to distinguish between allusion to Jews and Gentiles. Besides it is questionable whether the Thessalonians, who as Gentiles lacked in-depth knowledge of the OT, could have correctly interpreted such an allusion in the first place.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to Wanamaker’s objections, the parallel constructions in verses 8 & 10 suggest that the two groups in each verse should parallel one another in some way. Thus if one

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<sup>81</sup> Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 177–78.

<sup>82</sup> Those who “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”

<sup>83</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 227.

assigns the two groups in verse 8 to Jews and Gentiles, then one assign the phrase “holy people” in verse 10 to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are never referred to in this way in the rest of Scripture.

A better solution is to take “those who do not know God” in verse 8 as those who have never heard of Jesus Christ and are in rebellion against God. Similarly, “his holy people” in verse 10 points to those who have never heard of Jesus Christ, but are in a right relationship with God. Those who “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” in verse 8 and “all those who have believed” in verse 10 refer to those who have heard of Jesus Christ and their relationship to him. This interpretation has much in its favor.

First, as Wanamaker observes, Gentiles and Jews alike are described as “not knowing God” in the OT. Thus, this phrase would more naturally refer to all those stand in rebellion against God and who have never heard of Jesus Christ, regardless of their racial identity. The parallel phrase would then complement this reading. Those who “do not obey the gospel” also stand in rebellion against God, but their crime is more specific. They have heard the good news and rejected it. Thus the distinguishing feature that separates these two groups is not race, but rather their opportunity to hear and respond to the Gospel. Both groups stand condemned before God, but the nature of their condemnation is different. One group stands

condemned because they reject God's revelation (both general and special) prior to his revealing himself in his Son. The other group stands condemned because of their rejection of God's ultimate revelation: his special revelation in Jesus Christ.

Second, this reading parallels Paul's discussion of the lost in Romans. He begins his discussion by examining why those who have never heard are lost. Even though the invisible God has (in a sense) made himself visible, men have rejected what they know about God so that they are without excuse. "Although they knew God" (Rom 1:21), "they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God" (Rom 1:28). In Rom 2:1-29, Paul turns his attention to the Jews.<sup>84</sup> In this case they possessed God's special revelation, but did not obey him. Ultimately, the unbelieving Jews are condemned because they did not submit to God's righteousness that is found in Christ (Rom 10:3-4). Once again, the difference between the two groups is that one has had the opportunity to hear the good news and one has not.

Third, the division of the lost in 2 Thess 1:8 is in keeping with Jesus' explanation of the punishment of the lost. Luke 12:47-48 records Jesus as saying,

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<sup>84</sup> Although some hold that Rom 2:1-16 is actually an indictment of moral Gentiles [see for example Alva J. McClain, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace; The Lectures of Alva J. McClain*, ed. Herman A. Hoyt (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1981), 69-70.], this author maintains a Jewish audience throughout chapter two. For an excellent defense of this view see Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 125-26.

And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

While it is true that 2 Thess 1:8 provides no hint of a variation in punishment between the two groups, the mere fact that two separate groups will be punished suggests the distinction of which Jesus spoke.

Fourth, Paul specifically identifies his readers as ones who have believed (vs. 10). Thus Paul provides a contextual identifier for at least one of the two groups in 1:10—"all those who have believed." It is important to remember that the Thessalonian believers were predominately Gentile, but not exclusively so. Some of the Jews were also converted through Paul's ministry in the synagogue (Acts 17:4). This fact in and of itself precludes a racial distinction in identifying these two groups.

Fifth, this reading is in keeping with the context of 2 Thess 1:5. Paul is stressing the correctness of God's judgment in respect to the persecution that church was enduring. This judgment ultimately will result in these believers counted worthy for the kingdom of God. Wanamaker is most likely correct when he states that the "Gentiles lacked in-depth knowledge of

the OT.”<sup>85</sup> This being said, it does not take an in-depth knowledge of the OT to be familiar with the OT idea of the kingdom of God. This OT concept consisted of a physical, earthly, worldwide kingdom with David’s greater son as the supreme sovereign. What makes this significant is that any consideration of the kingdom of God must take into account both OT saints and NT saints, since both will be participants. Recognizing the two groups in 1:8 & 10 fits nicely into this context.

Finally, this reading also benefits from what might be called an “argument from the impossibility of the contrary.” For if one accepts the evidence that Paul’s use of a repeated article indicates two distinct groups, then what other options are available? If the racial distinction option is rejected (and rightly so), then what other categories remain? This author can think of none.

#### Objections to this Position

One might argue that the repetition of the article in the second phrase could point to a merism rather than a distinction between the referents. Thus Paul could be referring to the two extremes as a substitute for the whole. Thus in verse eight, Paul could be speaking of all those in rebellion against him but using a literary device to describe that one group by the two

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<sup>85</sup> Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 227.

chronological extremes—those in the OT and those in the NT. In the same way verse 10 would speak of the two chronological extremes of the one people of God—the OT saints and the NT saints.

At first blush this solution seems to be useful solution for those whose theological pre-commitment is for only one people of God. Unfortunately, there are two problems with this reading.

First, the larger context makes such a reading unlikely. As has been mentioned earlier, there are actually three parallel constructions in the immediate context, not just two. While the majority of this paper has focused on verses eight and ten, there is also the parallel construction found in 1:6b-7.

...ὄντα ποδοῦναι τοῖς θλιβουσιν ἰμοῖς θλιψιν καὶ ἰμοῖν τοῖς θλιβομένοις ὄνεσιν μεθ' ἰμοῖν (1:6-7)<sup>86</sup>

This string of parallel constructions, along with the rhythmic structure of 1:6-10 has widely been recognized as a self-contained unit. Best observes, “Various suggestions have been made about the origin of vv. 6-10 in view of their rhythmic structure, especially the number of parallelisms reminiscent of Semitic poetry.”<sup>87</sup> Since this section does indeed appear to be a

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<sup>86</sup> “pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled.”

<sup>87</sup> Best, *Thessalonians*, 266-267. Both Best and Wanamaker contend that this atypical use of parallelism indicates that this section consists of a

unit, one would expect that corresponding parallel constructions would be similar in interpretation. In 2 Thess 1:6b-7, the repeated article clearly distinguishes between two separate groups: those who trouble you and you who are troubled. One would anticipate the two following parallel construction to handle the repeated article in the same way. In other words, it seems best to expect three clearly parallel constructions to mirror one another in some way or another. It would be unusual for the first construction to show a distinction between the groups and the second and third to be merisms. This would break the clear poetic structure.

Second, merisms tend to be obvious in nature, almost to the point of being idioms. One reads of “buying and selling,” “coming and going,” “the living and the dead,” among others. The fact that they are merisms tends to be self-evident. This fact may be easily demonstrated. It is doubtful that the average grade-schooler has ever heard of a merism, yet that does not stop them from accurately identifying them and interpreting them! Yet the parallelism of 2 Thess 1:8 & 10 are anything but plain. Consider the diversity of opinion recorded in this paper alone. Based upon this lack of obviousness, it seems highly unlikely that 1:8 & 10 contain merisms. The most likely answer is that they are speaking of two differing groups.

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performed unit that was inserted by Paul, although Wanamaker, begins the performed unit in verse 7b (Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 232.).



### Implications of this Position

If the proposed reading is correct, then 2 Thess 1:10 becomes an important text in the debate concerning whether there are one or two peoples of God. More specifically, it addresses whether covenant, progressive dispensational, or essentialist dispensational theology is correct in their view of Israel and the Church.

The proposed reading of 2 Thess 1:10 argues for a distinction between Israel and the church during the present age, through the Great Tribulation, and into the Millennial Kingdom. While the effect of such a distinction upon covenant theology is relatively obvious, what is somewhat less clear is the effect this would have on progressive dispensationalism.

Any discussion of the relationship of Israel to the church must include at the outset a definition of what is meant by “distinction.”<sup>88</sup> The problem one encounters is that this “distinction” is often “stated in different ways by both friends and foes of dispensationalism.”<sup>89</sup> While some of the explanations

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<sup>88</sup> Even Covenant Theologians see *some* differences between these two, even if they maintain an essential unity between both groups. “The representation given in the preceding proceeds on the assumption that the Church existed in the old dispensation as well as in the new, and was *essentially* the same in both, in spite of acknowledged institutional and administrative differences.” L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4<sup>th</sup> revised and enlarged ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 571.

<sup>89</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 39.

are relatively straightforward, some can be remarkably obscure.<sup>90</sup> Fortunately, Blaising's concept of the relationship of the church to Israel is reasonably clear.

One of the striking differences between progressive and earlier dispensationalists, is that progressives do not view the church as an anthropological category in the same class as terms like Israel, Gentile Nations, Jews, and Gentile people. The church is neither a separate race of humanity (in contrast to Jews and Gentiles) nor a competing nation (alongside Israel and Gentile nations) nor is it a group of angelic-like humans destined for the heavens in contrast to the rest of redeemed humanity on earth...

The prophetic promises envision Christ ruling forever over the nations of the redeemed. The church is not another "people-group" in that picture. Those Jews and Gentiles who compose the church prior to Christ's coming join the redeemed Jews and Gentiles of earlier dispensations to share equally in resurrection glory. Those who during their dispensation had certain blessings only in promise or in an inaugurated form will all be brought to the same level of complete fulfillment when they are raised together from the dead. Redeemed Jews and Gentiles will share equally in the completed blessings of the Spirit.<sup>91</sup>

While Blaising is correct in stating that the church is not an anthropological category, his assertion that the church

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<sup>90</sup> "For dispensationalism, the church is an independently valid historical entity even though it is not an ontologically distinct entity. Although I do not hold to the older *parenthetical* (the 'after-thought' view) identity to the church in dispensationalism, I also do not hold to a *parasitic* ('footnote') view of the church in God's redemptive plans." Ramesh P. Richard, *The Population of Heaven* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 141 n 25.

<sup>91</sup> Craig A. Blaising, "The Extent and Varieties of Dispensationalism," in *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-To-Date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought* (Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1993), 49-50.

is not a “competing nation,” is more problematic.<sup>92</sup> Still, this definition at least has the virtue of being relatively clear. Under the Progressive Dispensational system, Israel was not the church in the Old Testament, although it was composed of believing Jews and Gentiles.<sup>93</sup> The church in this age is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. During the Millennial Kingdom, the church of this present dispensation and the believing remnant of past dispensations are joined together in resurrection life as the one people of God.<sup>94</sup>

The progressive dispensational understanding is called into question by a two-group understanding of 2 Thess 1:10. Paul seems to be making a distinction between the church and Israel

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<sup>92</sup> “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1Pet. 2:9 NIV.

<sup>93</sup> Actually Blaising classifies all of God’s people in the past dispensations as the “Remnant of Faith,” defined as “Believing Jews and Gentiles (a remnant of Israel and the Gentile nations).” Interestingly, this is the same way that he defines the Church: “Believing Jews and Gentiles (a remnant of Israel and the Gentile nations).” Ibid., 51. This statement seems to imply the Covenant viewpoint that Israel is the equivalent of the Old Testament church, in that the identifying factor of national Israel is a common faith. There is no Old Testament evidence for this view. In fact, when the nation of Israel was redeemed from Egypt, the fact that the mixed multitude that accompanied them was identified as such shows that Gentile believers were not considered part of the nation (Ex. 12:38). While these believers could enjoy the blessings that God bestowed upon national Israel, they remained distinct from it.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 51.

that extends at least through the Millennial Kingdom.<sup>95</sup> While the nature of that distinction is not explicitly stated, Paul nevertheless uses a grammatical structure that is primarily used to distinguish between two different persons or groups. This evidence argues against the understanding of progression of Israel into the church.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to show that Paul was referring to both OT and NT saints in 2 Thess 1:10, making a distinction between the two groups. This distinction is based upon a rejection of synonymous parallelism as an interpretive device and upon a correct grammatical understanding of the construction *article-participle-καὶ-article participle*.

This author recognizes that this one verse is not sufficient to end the debate surrounding the nature of the relationship between Israel and the church. Nevertheless it is hoped that the information presented here will be a positive contribution to that debate and that 2 Thess 1:10 will be seriously considered in future discussions.

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<sup>95</sup> This author understands the Day of the Lord to begin at the Rapture and terminate at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

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