

THE LITERARY UNITY OF 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-5:11

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1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 has been a fertile source of debate among both pre- and posttribulational advocates. Yet often wrong assumptions are made by the exegete when he/she approaches this important eschatological text of Paul. One of those assumptions is that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 describe two entirely different eschatological events. Coupled with this is the assumption that Paul describes both events through a diachronic time scheme. However, Paul in no way attempts to differentiate two events in this passage. Instead, Paul's eschatological presentation is very general or even "aoristic" in focus. This conclusion is drawn in some measure from a clear literary unity that characterizes the passage.

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INTRODUCTION

First Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 is one of the longest and earliest eschatological sections in the Pauline corpus. The passage contains a discussion of both the Parousia of Jesus and the Day of the Lord couched in the imagery of apocalyptic contemporary to the first century. The descriptions of these apocalyptic events along with their apparent imminent nature has raised numerous theological questions. Discussions related to Paul's view of imminency, his concept of eschatological development, and his use of apocalyptic imagery fill the literature. Another question which immediately emerges from an analysis of this text is whether the events described in 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 are to be viewed as distinct or in some sense equivalent. D. G. Bradley proposed that 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18 and 5: 1-11 were individual examples of the literary form *topos*.¹ According to Bradley, "the distinctive characteristic of the *topos* is that it is composed of

¹D. G. Bradley, "The *Topos* as a Form in the Pauline Paraenesis," *JBL* 72 (1953) 238-46.

more than one sentence dealing with the same subject.”² Furthermore, the *topos* is an independent form which is self-contained and has a loose or even arbitrary connection with the context.³ Hence both 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11, according to Bradley, deal with two similar though quite different situations. G. Friedrich has raised the problem of the authenticity of 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. He sees such incongruity between 5:1-11 and the preceding passage, 4:13-18, that he concludes that 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 is inauthentic, a non-Pauline interpolation.⁴ Other such as Harnisch⁵ and Schmithals,⁶ though accepting a Pauline authorship, argue that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 at a later date when the community became agitated by Gnostics. In the context of the pretribulational and posttribulational rapture debate, a distinction between the two texts is sometimes suggested. For example, Walvoord, a pretribulationist, writes:

The fact that the rapture is mentioned first in chapter 4 before the day of the Lord is presented in chapter 5 is significant. The important subject was the rapture, including the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the translation of living believers. The rapture is not introduced as a phase of the day of the Lord and seems to be *distinguished* from it...Accordingly, it is clear that 1 Thessalonians 5 is not talking specifically about the rapture, but about *another truth*.⁷ (Italics added.)

²Ibid., 240-43.

³Criticism has been offered on specific points of Bradley's thesis. V. P. Furnish says that Bradley's attempt to show this is not successful and adds: "There are few passages in the Pauline letters which cannot be related in some significant way to particular problems and needs the apostle is confronting" (*The Love Command in the New Testament* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972], 90). More recently others have likewise criticized Bradley's view. Terence Y. Mullins narrows Bradley's definition by showing that the *topos* has three essential elements: injunction, reason, and discussion ("Topos as a NT Form," *JBL* 99 [1980] 541-47); John C. Brunt has argued additionally that appeal to the *topos* form to show that advice is not directed to a specific situation is not valid ("More on the *Topos* as a New Testament Form," *JBL* 104 [1985] 495-500). Brunt's criticism is important. In reference to this paper, an appeal to the form *topos* is simply not sufficient to indicate an isolated or arbitrary unit. Thus although 1 Thess 5:1-11 may reflect the form of *topos*, such does not of necessity argue for its isolation from 1 Thess 4:13-18 if other contextual features suggest otherwise.

⁴Gerhard Friedrich, *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher und Philemon*, NTD, vol. 8 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976) 203-51.

⁵Wolfgang Harnisch, *Eschatologische Existenz: Ein Exegetischer Beitrag zum Sachanliegen von 1. Thessalonischer 4:13-5:11*, FRLANT, vol. 110 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1973) 77-82.

⁶John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation: A Biblical and Historical Study of Posttribulationism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House,

This feeling of disparity between 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 raises the need for a thorough evaluation of the entire section in order to see whether such disparity is real or only apparent. Is there a disjunction between the two texts or does 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-5: 11 constitute literary as well as theological unity? In order to evaluate the literary and theological unity of the entire pericope, several questions must be addressed:

1. Does Paul's purpose change from 4:13-18 to 5:1-11, or does it remain the same throughout the pericope. In other words, does Paul maintain a parenetic purpose or shift his purpose at 5:1?
2. Is the subject matter the same in 4:13-18 and 5:1-11? Related to this question is the significance of **peri de** in 5:1. Does this phrase constitute a major break in Paul's subject matter? If so, does this disjunction automatically suggest the disparity that many attempt to support?
3. Are there any stylistic parallels between 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 that would suggest literary unity throughout both passages, namely, the repetition of a pre-Pauline credal formula or perhaps an *inclusio*?
4. Is there internal consistency throughout 4:13-5: 11? If it could be shown that 4:13-5:11 (or at least a major portion of it) is closely parallel in structure and arrangement to another unified pericope in the New Testament, this would suggest the essential unity of 4:13-5:11 rather than a disjunction at 5:1.
5. Is there any evidence of theological change from 4:13-18 to 5:1-11, namely, is there any distinction between **parousia**, "Parousia" and "**hmera kuriou**, "Day of the Lord?" If not, why does Paul change his terminology to describe the same event? Furthermore, if there is no distinction, what then is the nature of Pauline eschatology as presented in 4:13-5:11?

The purpose of this study is to address these questions and to set forth reasons that support the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. Limitation of space forbids a detailed exegetical analysis of the entire pericope. Thus while it is necessary to present an exegetical

1976) 115; see also Paul D. Feinberg, "A Response to 'The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position' by Douglas J. Moo," in *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation?*, ed. Richard R. Reiter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 226. Feinberg argues that Paul clearly intends some kind of distinction between 1 Thess 4:13-18 and 5:1-11.

analysis of some texts, elsewhere the discussion will be a presentation of the results of the exegetical work done in the passage.

The phrase *literary unity* is understood to mean that an author, in this case Paul, conveys the same subject matter with a unified purpose throughout a given text without a major disjunction in either subject matter or purpose. It will be proposed that Paul deliberately employs certain literary devices to accomplish the task of communicating a unified message. There are several features which suggest that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 is to be regarded as one unified pericope.

PAUL'S PARENETIC PURPOSE

Both 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 are parenetic in purpose. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:22, Paul amplifies the instruction he gave while at Thessalonica in light of information he received from Timothy. In this portion of the letter he considers their life and faith in the community. For this reason, this entire section of the epistle has been called *parenesis*.⁸ However, the passage does not comprise one subject but several.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Paul addresses the issue of sexual purity (4:3-8) followed by an exhortation to love one another (4:9-12). He then shifts his focus to a lengthy eschatological discourse which constitutes the heart of his parenesis.⁹ Two major issues comprise this discussion. The first is the relation of the dead to the Parousia (4:13-18), and the second is the ethical responsibility of those alive in view of the coming Day of the Lord (5:1-11). The purpose of Paul's discussion in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 is not primarily theological but eschatological issues are addressed in view of *ethical concerns*. Paul's purpose in 4:13-18 is stated explicitly in verse 13. For that reason, a more detailed examination of verse 13 is appropriate in order to clarify his parenetic focus.

Paul introduces a transition in thought which is indicated by the particle **de** as well as the phrase **ou qelomen de umaj agnoein adel f oi**, "now we do not desire you to be ignorant brethren." This phrase is used elsewhere by Paul to introduce a new topic.¹⁰ Specifically, Paul

⁸*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, s.v. "Parenesis," by D. Schroeder, 643. Schroeder defines parenesis as a "technical term to refer to all general exhortations of an ethical nature."

⁹Edgar Krentz, "1 Thess.: A Document of Roman Hellenism" (unpublished paper presented to the Thessalonians Seminar, National Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 1979) 15.

¹⁰Cf. 2 Cor 1:8; Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 12:1.

desires these believers not to be ignorant "regarding those who have fallen asleep," **peri twn kekoimhmenwn**.¹¹ From the use of **peri**¹² following **agnoein**, it is evident that the problem these believers faced centered on the fortune of the faithful departed (**twn kekoimhmenwn**).¹³ Thus it is likely that the cause of their sorrow was not disappointment over the nonarrival of the Parousia, as Best suggests,¹⁴ but rather anxiety over the issue of whether the Christian dead would suffer a disadvantage at the Parousia.¹⁵ The question still remains why Paul

¹¹ The perfect **kekoimhmenwn** has better geographical distribution (DFG M) than the present **koimwmenwn** (⌘ A B 33.81) and is preferred. There is little difference in meaning in view of Paul's overall purpose. The perfect would reflect the present *state* of those who had already died whereas the present would suggest a continual process during which various ones died at different times.

¹² **peri** with the genitive denotes the object or person to which the action refers or relates; see BAGD, 644.

¹³ **koma w** was used literally in both non-biblical and biblical Greek to denote the activity of sleeping (Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.372; [LXX] Gen 19:14; 28:11; 1 Esdr 3:3; Tob 2:9; 1 Macc 11:6; Matt 28:13; Luke 22:45; John 11:12; Acts 12:6). However, **koima w** was also used metaphorically in antiquity in the sense of *death* (Homer, *Illiad* 11:241; [LXX] 3 Kgs 2:10 [the idiom "to sleep with one's fathers" occurs 33 times in the [LXX]; cf. 2 Macc 12:42-45; in this text the phrase "fallen asleep in godliness" closely resembles the use found in 1 Thess 4:13). In the New Testament, fourteen out of eighteen occurrences of **koima w** are references to death, and interestingly, all of the Pauline uses are in this category (1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15 [of the 9 occurrences in Paul, 7 appear in two major eschatological texts, 1 Cor 15 and 1 Thess 4]). The use of sleep for death is probably a euphemism (see Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* [New York: Harper and Row, 1972] 185; F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982] 95; H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904] 247). It may be going too far to read into the work an implicit concept of *that from which one would awaken* (Bruce, 96), although it is quite true that the word meant this in contemporary Jewish writings (cf. 2 Esdr 7:32, "and the earth shall give up those who sleep in it" [NEB], is followed in 7:76 by a description of the joy experienced by the righteous in their habitations immediately after death and before they are awakened; see also 1 *Enoch* 100:51; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 21:24). The problem with seeing an implicit idea of awaken is that the metaphor of sleep as death occurs in works unacquainted with a resurrection hope (R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* [New York: Schocken Books, 1963] 132, n. 1. For example, in Catullus 5:4-6 one reads, "Suns may set and rise again. For us, when the short light has once set, remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night."). Thus such a metaphor does not arise from the idea of a body left behind while the soul departs to a continued existence elsewhere or from the notion that the sleeping person will afterwards wake up to new life. Certainly the metaphor is in harmony with resurrection (Alfred Plummer, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians* [London: Robert Scott, 1918] 69) but it probably only suggests the similarity in appearance between a sleeping body and a dead body, i.e., restfulness and peace normally characterize both (*TDNT*, s.v. "**ka qeudw**," by A. Oepke, 3:433).

¹⁴ Best, *Thessalonians*, 203.

¹⁵ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 95; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (reprint ed., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980) 291; A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966) 108-09; Williams Neil, *The Epistle of Paul to the*

would have had to deal with this issue in this particular community. A couple of reasons may be suggested.

First, it is possible that this is an issue on which the Thessalonian Christians had not been adequately informed.¹⁶ While with these believers it is possible that Paul had not discussed the relation of survivors to the dead at the Parousia. Apparently some of the believers had died since the time of Paul's visit and, consequently, questions had arisen concerning the relation of the faithful departed to the Parousia.

Second, it is possible that a subtle polemic is offered against a contemporary teaching that advocated the advantage of those alive at the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. One of the main currents of eschatological thought in Judaism was that the Messianic Kingdom would be the consummation of world history and its scene would be this earth, albeit an earth transformed in different ways. Davies says that "according to the earliest sources only those alive at the advent of the Messiah would be judged and could participate in the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom."¹⁷ In 4 Ezra the author gives a vision of the Man rising from the sea; in this vision the pre-existent Messiah, following the annihilation of His enemies, gathers a multitude of his own remnant to himself. 4 Ezra 13:22-24 says:

As for what you said about those who are left, this is the interpretation: He who brings the peril at that time will himself protect those who fall into peril, who have works and have faith in the Almighty. Understand therefore that *those who are left are more blessed than those who have died*.¹⁸ (Italics added.)

The suggestions of a polemic against such teaching would help to explain the anxiety growing out of the possibility that those who died did not have the same advantage as those who were alive at the Parousia. This might also explain why Paul uses such emphatic

Thessalonians (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950) 99; Beda Rigaux, *Les Epitres Aux Thessaloniens* (Paris: Librairie Leoffre, 1956) 527.

¹⁶ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, p. 95; James E. Frame, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912) 164; see also Willi Marxen, "Auslegung von 1 Thess 4, 13-18," *ZTK* 66 (1969) 26.

¹⁷ Davies, *Judaism*, 287.

¹⁸ B. M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction," in vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983) 552; see also *2 Apoc. Bar.* 70.1-71-1. It is not out of the question that such a view may have been held by scribes prior to A.D. 70 and that the Thessalonians had been influenced by such a view through their exposure to the synagogue (cf. Acts. 17:2-4).

language as, "we who are alive and remain until the Parousia will by no means precede those who have died" (cf. v. 15, **ou mh f qas w-men**).¹⁹ One, however, need not suppose with Schmithals that the community was misled by gnosticizing visitors who completely denied the future resurrection hope.²⁰

The purpose of Paul's desire for these believers not to be ignorant regarding those who had died is that "they might not grieve as those who do not have hope," **ina mh luphs qe kaqwj kai oi lipoi oi mh exontej elpida**. The **ina** should be taken as introducing purpose rather than result.²¹ This is the only purpose statement in 4:13-18 and it is related to pastoral or parenetic concerns, namely, that these believers "might not grieve." The verb **lupew** normally conveys the idea of "grief, distress, sadness, or sorrow."²² The negative **mh** with the present subjunctive may suggest in this context the desire for the cessation of an action already in progress. Those in this community were in the process of grieving over loved ones who had died, apparently for fear that they might suffer disadvantage at the Parousia. Paul is thus attempting to comfort them in this grief (cf. 4:18).

Paul further qualifies his purpose by a comparative clause introduced by **kaqwj kai**. He states that his desire is that these believers not grieve "as also the rest who do not have hope," **kaqwj koipoi oi mh exontej elpida**. Two alternatives are possible for the interpretation of **kaqwj**. First, it is possible to take the comparative particle as introducing a comparison of manner.²³ This would mean that Paul did not desire this congregation to grieve in the same way as those who have no hope. The second possibility is to take **kaqwj** in an absolute sense.²⁴ This would mean that Paul is telling those at Thessalonica not to grieve at all as do unbelievers who have no hope. Such an absolute sense would not exclude sorrow over the loss of a

¹⁹ The construction **ou' mh** with the subjunctive **f qas women** here expresses emphatic negation.

²⁰ Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972) 160-62.

²¹ BAGD, p. 376; **ina** most frequently denotes purpose rather than conceived result, although at times it becomes very difficult to distinguish the two. The problem is that the semitic mind was reluctant to distinguish between the purpose and consequence, particularly in light of God's actions (cf. M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. Joseph Smith [Rome Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963], #351-52; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* [Cambridge: University Press, 1959] 142).

²² *Ibid.*, 481.

²³ *Ibid.*, 391.

²⁴ John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (reprint ed., Minneapolis: James and Klock Christian Publishing Co., 1977) 145-49; Frame, *Thessalonians*, 167; Neil, *Thessalonians*, 92; D. E. H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 68.

loved one, but it would preclude sorrow as far as the Parousia is concerned.²⁵

The discussion to this point reveals Paul's parenetic purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. He is not attempting to set forth an isolated eschatological discourse but is addressing a very practical problem within the community that involved eschatological concerns. Paul desires to communicate a message of comfort, a message that promises resurrection for departed believers by virtue of their identification and union with Christ. This same union also provides the basis for the translation of those who are alive at His Parousia (cf. 4: 17). That the hope of resurrection to be with Christ is grounded in the resurrection of Christ Himself²⁶ is made evident in verses 15-17. Because Christ arose from the dead, those believers who have died in the Lord prior to the Parousia will in no way experience any disadvantage when Jesus comes. Instead, they will actually precede those who are alive at that time (14:16-17).

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul's parenesis continues in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. In 4:13-18 he addresses the issue of the position of the *dead in Christ* at the Parousia with the purpose of comforting those alive. He now shifts his emphasis slightly to address the ethical responsibilities of living believers in light of the coming Day of the Lord. Instead of addressing the time in which the Day of the Lord will come, he states that no one knows *the times and the seasons* (**twm xronwn kai twn kairwn**)

²⁵ Best, p. 186. The reason why such a grief is precluded is because it is a characteristic of "those who do not have hope." Most likely this denote unbelieving humanity outside of Christ (cf. Eph 2:3, 12). The concept of hope for Paul is especially related to the promise of blessedness and joy the believer will experience at the Parousia (cf. Titus 2:13). That this hope is not connected simply to a belief in the after-life is clear. It is evident from Greek writers, both pagan and Jewish, that there was a belief in an after-life (Plato in *Gorgias*, 524D states that the individual should not be judged except after death for then the soul is separated from the body; then the soul strips out of the deceiving clothing of the body and it can be judged justly; cf. *Cratylus*, 403B. Furthermore, there also existed a hope in view of death in Jewish circles; cf. Philo, *de Virtutibus*, 76; *Legum Allegoriarum*, 2:57, 59; he also held the Greek view that the nakedness of the soul after death was desirable; see Wis 3:1-4: "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them...yet is their hope full of immortality"; also it is evident that resurrection was an aspect of rabbinic theology; cf. *Sota* 9.15; *Sanh* 10:1). However, the believer has been identified in a *union* with both the death and the resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom 6:3-5). Because of this union, those believers who have died will be raised to be with Christ when He returns at the Parousia. This is a hope about which the pagan world knew nothing.

²⁶ *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* s.v. "Hope," by Alan Richardson; NIDNTT, s.v. "Hope," by E. Hoffmann, 2:242.

of its coming because it comes "as a thief in the night" (**wj klept hj en nukt i**) (vv. 1-2). Paul is telling the Thessalonians that they do not need someone to write to them concerning the times and the seasons of the Day of the Lord because it is not for any person to know this information.²⁷ However, what they should know is that the Day is coming and one's preparation for it is dependent on that person's spiritual condition. Paul says that those who ate unbelievers will be overtaken in surprise and will *by no means escape* judgment (v. 3).²⁸

Paul shifts his emphasis in verse 4 to address the relation of the Day of the Lord to the believing community.²⁹ Paul employs an *indicative-imperative* model in his discussion. He first tells these believers what they are in verses 4-5 (*indicative*) and then he exhorts them to *live out* what they are in verses 6-8 (*imperative*). In verses 4-5 Paul says that believers are not in darkness (**en s kot ei**) but instead are sons of light (**uioi f wt oj**).³⁰ Christians are not a part of the darkness in which the unbelieving world lies. They are instead identified with Christ. Thus as a result (**ina**)³¹ they will not be in a

²⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), pp. 107-08; also John A. Sproule, "An Exegetical Defense of Pretribulationism" (Th.D. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, May 1981) 157.

²⁸ This is the second time Paul uses **ou mh** with the subjunctive (**ekf ugws in**) in this eschatological discourse for emphatic negation (cf. 4:15).

²⁹ The shift to believers from humankind in general is indicated by the adversative use of **de** as well as the change to the second person **umeij** along with the vocative **adel f oi**.

³⁰ The imagery of light and darkness is frequently used throughout ancient literature. The figures of "darkness" (**רְחֵק**) and "light" (**אֵר**) are found in the Old Testament to denote two opposing ethical spheres in which sinners and believers exist (*darkness*: Job 29:3; Isa 2:5; Mic 7:8; *light*: Job 22:9-11; Pss 74:20; 82:5). The use of light and darkness in relation to eschatology and ethics became especially strong at Qumran as well as in Jewish apocalyptic material (see IQS 3:13-4:26; esp. 4:15-16; 4:26 which describes two categories of humanity: one of light and the other of darkness. The text says in 15:16, "In these [two] classes all the hosts of their generations have a share; in their [two] ways they walk and the entire work of their activity [falls] within their [two] classes, according to everybody's share, large or small, in all times forever"; then in 26, "He knows the work of their actions in all times [of eternity] and He allots them to mankind for knowledge of good [and evil], this deciding the fate of every living being, according to his spiritual quality...visitation," [Italics added], *The Manual of Discipline*, trans. P. Wenberg Moller [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957] 26-27; regarding *light* and *darkness* in Qumran texts, see further Friedrich Notscher, *Zur Theologischen Terminologie Der Qumran Texte* [Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1956] 92-133. For the use of *light* and *darkness* in Jewish apocalyptic, see *T. Naph.* 2:7-10; *T. Benj.* 5:3; *1 Enoch* 61:12; 108:11). The antithesis of light and darkness is also frequent in the New Testament, particularly in Paul (Rom 1:21; 2:19; 13:11-13; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Cor 4:6; 6:14). In Paul these figures seem to portray a position or sphere in which one exists by virtue of whether or not that person is in union with Christ.

(31) Although **ina** normally introduces purpose, most of the grammarians list this as a rare example of result; cf. BDF, #391.5; Zerwick, #351-52; Moule, p. 142; A. T.

state that the Day may surprise them as a thief (**wj klepthj**). In addition to calling these believers **uioi f wtoj**, Paul also says they are "sons of the day" (**uioi hmeraj**). The Day has not yet arrived but believers in Christ are sons of the day already by a form of realized eschatology. Paul's eschatology for the most part assumes a framework of the aeons, one present and one to come.³² However, for Paul the Christian, the age to come has been inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Jesus who is the first fruits of many to follow (cf. 4:13-14; 1 Cor 15:23). Those who are believers, by virtue of their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, now live paradoxically in two worlds. Although they still live in the present age there is a sense in which they are a part of the age to come, children of the *Day*. Those, on the other hand, who have not come to the light but still live in darkness will be caught off guard by the Day when it comes. That believers have some kind of relationship to the Day of the Lord seems to be without question. Paul clearly says that when this event breaks into human history those who are in the light and who are sons of the day will not be surprised. He does not say that they will not be surprised *because they will not be here*.

Paul has emphatically stated that Christians and non-Christians belong to different spheres of existence; the former are new creations (2 Cor 5:17; Ga16:15). Having made this clear he can move directly to his purpose, namely, his parenetic concerns. The Christian is able to respond differently than the non-Christian to the apocalyptic situation. The transition to exhortation is made by the Apostle through a tactful change in verse 5b from second to first person (from **es te** to **es men**) suggesting that Paul includes himself in the exhortation he offers in verses 6-8.

The introductory phrase **ara oun** in verse 6 is strongly inferential and always indicates a new stage in the argument in Paul (cf. Rom 5:18; 7:3, 25; 8:12),³³ in this case a move to parenesis. As Best notes, this parenesis "is based on what Christians are as 'sons of light.'",³⁴

Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934) 998.

³² Cf. Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18, 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; 2:2, 7; 3:9; Col 1:26; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:10; Titus 2:12; in Jewish apocalyptic material the eschatological framework which is frequently found is that of the two ages, i.e., the present age which is evil and rebellious (2 Esdr 7:50; 4:27; 6:7-9; 2 *Enoch* 66:6) and the age to come, or Blessed Age (2 *Enoch* 58:5; 61:2; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 44:12; see also Isa 65:17; Jer 31:10-14; Zech 14:7; Dan 7:22; 12:9, 13); for a good discussion of this concept at Qumran, see E. J. Pryke, "Some Aspects of Eschatology in the Dead Sea Scrolls," SE, vol. 5, pt. 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968) 296-302; see also Davies, *Judaism*, 317-18 (cf. *Sanh* 10).

³³ Best, *Thessalonians*, 211; BAGD, 103.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 211.

While "sons of light" may be a proper designation to the new age, Christians are not yet completely in that age and still have to deal presently with the struggles of this age. Paul thus exhorts these believers to spiritual alertness through a series of hortatory subjunctives. He first exhorts them not to sleep (**mh ka qeudwmen**) but to be awake (**grhgorewmen**) and alert (**nh f wmen**) (v. 6). Paul desires them not to sleep because such behavior is a characteristic of this age.³⁵ Instead they are exhorted to exhibit a behavior which is ethically upright.³⁶ In verse 8 Paul reiterates the *indicative-imperative* model. Because the believer is characterized by the Day,³⁷ he is exhorted to be vigilant (**nh f wmen**) in view of the coming Day of the Lord.³⁸ Paul's parenetic focus is quite clear. From the use of the metaphors of *wakefulness* and *sobriety* it is apparent that Paul desires the believer to exhibit a certain character at the Day of the Lord; he is not simply suggesting an attitude of sober awareness of what is happening but moral sobriety. This idea is not uncommon in Paul, particularly in 1 Thessalonians. In 3:13 and 5:23 he writes that the believer will stand "before" Jesus (**empros qen**) when the Parousia occurs, and it is His desire that the believer be "blameless" (**ameptouj**). This would mean that the Day of the Lord and Parousia impose similar ethical demands on the believer and would also suggest their similarity, if not their identity.

It has been shown that Paul's purpose in both 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 is similar, namely, parenetic. He is not concerned about eschatological details but instead how eschatology relates to ethics. He does not attempt to give any future chronology but instead is concerned about how a future event (the Parousia/Day of the

³⁵ BAGD, 388; the figurative nuance is also found in classical Greek with a derogatory sense; the term serves to indicate defective concentration or a deficient action (cf. Plato, *Ion*, 536b).

³⁶ B. N. Kaye, "Eschatology and Ethics in I and 2 Thessalonians," *NovT* 17 (1975) 49; **grhgorew** and **nh f w** occur elsewhere in eschatological contexts (**grhgorew**: Matt 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:34, 35, 37; Luke 12:37; I Pet 5:8; **nh f w**: I Pet 4:17); for an excellent discussion of **nh f w** and its eschatological flavor see *TDNT*, s.v., "**nh f w**," by O. Baurenfiend, 4:936-39; also Evald Lovestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963) 54. The word was used in non-biblical Greek as *sober* in contrast to *drunkenness* (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1274b); however, in *Corpus Hermeticum* it was used metaphorically for *sober mindedness* (see 133.11; 171.22; in both of these texts the contrast is made with **meequw**, also used metaphorically). It would appear that Paul is employing a similar nuance, namely, a sober expectancy in view of the coming Day of the Lord. Moore says that it denotes the "serious responsibility of moral behavior as drunkenness denotes the abandonment of self control and responsibility" (*Parousia*, 74).

³⁷ The participle **ontej** should be taken as causal.

³⁸ The translation "vigilant" is suggested by the military figures employed in v. 8 (**qwraka** and **perikef alaiian**).

Lord) affects the present lifestyle of believers. Nevertheless, that each passage (4:13-18 and 5:1-11) is parenetic would certainly not be sufficient to demonstrate literary unity were it not for the fact that each passage deals with the same subject matter, namely eschatology. Thus the similarity in subject matter gives the second basis for advocating the literary unity of the entire pericope.

SIMILARITY IN SUBJECT MATTER

Although Paul began his parenetic discourse in 4:1, he does not discuss eschatology until 4:13. Furthermore, he leaves his discussion of eschatology in 5:12 to address general community ethics. Thus in 4:13-5:11 one might suggest that the same subject and event are described, albeit from two different perspectives. There are, however, two factors which must be addressed in conjunction with this proposal. The first is the structural problem of **peri de** in 5:1 and the second is the problem of equating Parousia with Day of the Lord.

According to some, the use of **peri de** proposes a sharp contrast in thought, thus introducing a new response to a question asked by the Thessalonian community.³⁹ Others prefer to see it as introducing a shift to new subject without necessarily any reference to a response to a question. For example, Paul Feinberg says:

the connective is not simply **de** but **peri de**. The subject need not be so different that they are in contrast, but there *is not simply the continuation of the same subject*. This is Paul's typical way of introducing a *new topic* (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:9, 13). Paul clearly intends some kind of distinction here.⁴⁰ (Italics added.)

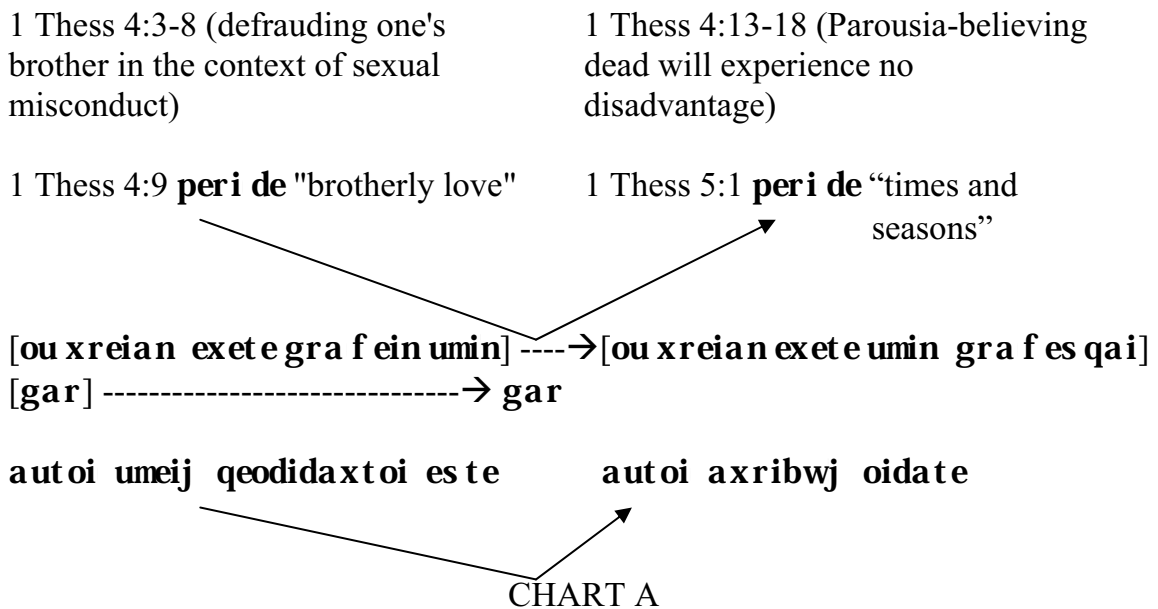
It is puzzling that Feinberg lists 4:13 as an example of the use of **peri de** when actually only **de** occurs there. One, however, might agree with some of what Feinberg has suggested. There is a sense in which **peri de** does introduce a contrast; particularly in lists of similar things it brings about a clearer separation.⁴¹ However, such does not hamper a proposal of literary unity for the passage. One could easily argue that in 5:17 **peri de** does not necessarily introduce a new subject but rather a different ethical concern in light of the same subject, namely, comfort regarding the Parousia in 4:13-18 and exhortation to spiritual alertness in light of the Parousia/ Day of the Lord in 5: 1-11. Also,

³⁹ See C. E. Faw, "On the Writing of First Thessalonians," *JBL* 71 (1952) 217-32; J. R. Harris, "A Study in Letter-Writing," *Expositor*, series 5, 8 (1898) 161-80; the suggestion of a response to a letter is based on the way Paul uses the phrase in 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1 and 16:1.

⁴⁰ Feinberg, *Response to Moo*, 226.

⁴¹ BAGD, 171.

that Paul continues the same subject might be suggested by the way in which he employs **peri de** both in 4:9 and in 5:1. In 1 Thessalonians 4:6 Paul warns against transgressing (**uperbainw**) and defrauding (**pleonektew**) one's brother. These activities are the very opposite of "brotherly love" (**filadelfia**), activities that Paul desires these believers to avoid. Paul then picks up the theme of "brotherly love" in 4:9 which he introduces with **peri de**. He says, "now concerning the *love of the brethren*, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." Best acknowledges the connection between the preceding discussion, i.e., defrauding a brother, and the concept of "brotherly love" in verse 9. He says, "Here the break must be Paul's movement from a general statement on brotherly love to the nature of that love in a particular situation."⁴² Likewise, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul writes on the subject of the Parousia. Then in 5:1 he continues the same subject (although now he addresses the *time* of the Parousia) which he also introduces by **peri de**. He writes, "now concerning the times and the epochs (of the Parousia), brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you, for you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief. ..." In both instances (4:9 and 5:1) **peri de** picks up the preceding theme and reintroduces it with additional discussion. Note the structure indicated in Chart A.



Because **peri de** is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 it is reasonable to look for parallels with its use in 5:1. The chart above suggests that possibility. However, it is also possible that **peri de** finds a parallel in

⁴² Best, *Thessalonians*, 171; see also George Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Macmillan Co., 1908) 52; he says, "From impurity, which is at

Matthew 24:36. In both 1 Thessalonians 5:1 and Matthew 24:36 **peri de** introduces statements that describe the *unknowable* character of the Parousia/Day of the Lord. Also, the fact that Matthew rarely uses **peri de** (only here and 22:31) may suggest that the phrase was part of an oral tradition upon which both Matthew and Paul drew and should not be considered simply a stylistic inclusion on the part of each writer. Other parallels in language between 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 and Matthew 24 and 25 (as will be discussed later) might likewise support this suggestion. If 1 Thessalonians 5:1 and Matthew 24:36 are parallel, this might help to explain how Paul uses **peri de** in 5:1. For example, Matthew 24:29-31 describes the coming (Parousia) of the Son of Man. Following this, 24:36 states, "now concerning that day..." (**peri de thj hmeraj ekeinhs**). The obvious question is what day? In 24:37, this is answered by employing the phrase **h parousia out uiou tou anqrwpou**; here the reference is to the Parousia of the Son of Man, the same event he portrayed earlier in verses 29-31. There is no change to a different subject but instead a shift in emphasis in light of the same subject, namely, the coming Parousia. Matthew, like Paul, also moves to a series of ethical injunctions regarding alertness in view of the unexpected character of the Parousia of the Son of Man (cf. Matt 24:42, 44; 25:13). Hence the literary structure of both Matthew and Paul exhibit interesting similarities.

Although the phrase **peri de** remains a problem, it is certainly not overwhelming to the proposed thesis of literary unity. Yet, there is another problem which must be answered if it is concluded that Paul is portraying the same event but with a difference in focus or emphasis; the problem is Paul's shift in terminology from *Parousia* in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 to *Day of the Lord* in 5:2, 4. Such a difference in terminology might lead to the notion of disparity between the two sections, 4:13-18 and 5:1-11. However, if Parousia and Day of the Lord are references to the same event why does Paul change his terminology?

The basic meaning of **parousia** is either *presence*⁴³ or *arrival*.⁴⁴ In the hellenistic world the word came to have particular associations with the arrival of a central figure. It denoted the ceremonial arrival of a ruler to a city where he was greeted with honors of one kind or another.⁴⁵ The "parousia" was more than the physical act of arrival. It also included the attendant ceremonies with which the ruler was root so cruel and selfish, the Apostles pass by a subtle link of connexion to the practice of brotherly or Christian love, admitting frankly at the same time the Thessalonians' zeal in this respect."

⁴³ 2 Macc 15:21; 3 Macc 3:17; 2 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:12.

⁴⁴ Jdt 10:18; 2 Macc 8:12; 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6-7.

⁴⁵ In Tebtunis papyrus 48:14, a description is given of plans "in connection with the king's visit," **proj thn tou basilewj parousian**; cf. *Corpus Hermeticum* (Poimandres)

honored.⁴⁶ In the New Testament the word takes on a technical sense for the future advent of Christ. Out of its twenty-four uses in the New Testament sixteen relate to the future advent of Christ.⁴⁷ However, outside of the Thessalonian correspondence, 1 Corinthians 15:23 is the only passage in which Paul speaks of Christ's Parousia.⁴⁸ For this reason Deissmann sees a close association between Paul's use of the word and the technical sense it attained in the hellenistic world.⁴⁹ Yet, it is very possible that Paul conceives of the Parousia in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 as the coming of the Son of Man described in Matthew 24:27, 37, 39. This is suggested by the use of **parousia** in both contexts. As Best points out, "in the primitive community Jesus comes to be identified with the Son of Man and since the Son of Man is an eschatological future figure and has to still appear Jesus must return as the Son of Man and in the epistles this is interpreted either as the Parousia of Christ or as the Day of the Lord."⁵⁰ This eschatological coming of the Son of Man involves not only the glorious manifestation of Christ but can also mean judgment.⁵¹ However, in 1 Thessalonians, Paul's use of **parousia** has very positive connotations for the believer (cf. 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-17; 5:23).

The fact that the eschatological coming of the Son of Man involved judgment on sinners may explain why Paul shifts his terminology to Day of the Lord in 5:2, namely, because of the judgment motif he introduces in this verse. In the Old Testament the phrase **יְהוָה יוֹם** denotes a decisive intervention of God for judgment and

1.26a; 1.127.17; a similar use is found in Josephus, *Antiquities*, 111.80, 202; IX. 55; XVIII. 284. For a good discussion of this nuance of **parousia** see *TDNT*, s. v. "**parousia**," by A. Oepke, 5:858.

⁴⁶ Deissmann notes that when an event of this nature occurred, coins were minted, money was collected, and even in the case of Hadrian, a new era was reckoned (Adolph Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978) 368-73.

⁴⁷ Cf. Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12. For a discussion of synonymous terms also used for Christ's future advent, see Gundry, *Tribulation*, 158-59.

⁴⁸ Elsewhere in Paul's letters **parousia** always refers to the arrival of a human being; cf. 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6; 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12; in the last of these three texts Paul refers to himself; for a treatment of this concept, see Robert Funk, "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. A. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 249-68.

⁴⁹ Deissmann, *Light*, 372.

⁵⁰ Best, *Thessalonians*, 350-51; also H. J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959) 102.

⁵¹ L. Cerfaux notes the similarity in descriptions between the eschatological coming of the son of Man in *1 Enoch* and that of Christ (the Son of Man) (*Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1959] 36-37, esp. n. 170. The description of the coming of the Son of Man in the New Testament as well as in Jewish

deliverance.⁵² It can refer to a near event or to the final climactic event, although it is not always clear that the prophets distinguished the two.⁵³ Yet, while the Day is frequently described as one of judgment,⁵⁴ deliverance for the people of God is also delineated as part of the Day.⁵⁵ In the New Testament there is great variety of expressions for the Day (which consistently refers to the end of the age) and it is evident that there is no fixed terminology.⁵⁶ The Old Testament idea of the Day of the Lord is thoroughly *Christianized* in Paul and hence the blessing associated with it is directly connected to one's relationship with Christ. Those who are *in Christ* anticipate His *presence* or Parousia whereas those who are *outside of Christ* will be overtaken in judgment, a motif in harmony with the phrase **hmera kuriou**.

The question then is what does this imply regarding the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5: 11? Instead of Paul presenting two different events, it is suggested that Paul is presenting a *single* eschatological event from two perspectives. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Paul describes this event as a time of blessing for Christians and hence uses the term **arpis ia** whereas in 5:1-3 he describes the judgment this event brings and thus uses the phrase **hmera kuriou**. Paul's eschatological presentation might be considered *aoristic* in that it says *nothing* about whether these aspects (blessing and judgment) are in actuality on different parts of a chronological time line. Furthermore, he says absolutely *nothing* about a seven year Tribulation period although his presentation certainly allows for it. A challenge can be raised to Gundry who, while equating Parousia and Day of

apocalyptic material is probably under the influence of the Danielic figure in Dan 7; see *1 Enoch* 48:2, 7; 49:2, 4; 51:3; 62:5; 69:27, 29; 71:16. Particularly interesting in this regard is *1 Enoch* 69:26-29 in which the revelation of the Son of Man is described. It is said to be a great blessing for the righteous and judgment for sinners.

⁵² C. H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM, 1956) 178-200.

⁵³ Douglas J. Moo, "The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position," in *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?*, ed. Richard R. Reiter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984) 183.

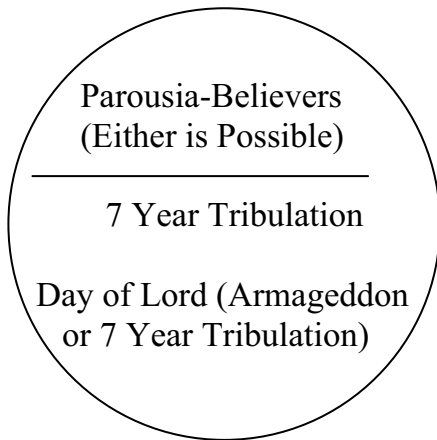
⁵⁴ Amos 5:18-20; Joel 1:15; Isa 13:6,9; for a good discussion of the "Day of the Lord" in the Old Testament and its connection with judgment, see *TDNT*, s.v. "**hmera**," by Gerhard von Rad, 2:944-47.

⁵⁵ Isa 27; Jer 30:8-9; Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 15-17.

⁵⁶ Moo lists at least eighteen different expressions that refer to this concept; the most noticeable are: 1) "The day of Christ" (Phil 1:10; 2:16); 2) "The day of our Lord Jesus" (2 Cor 1:14); 3) "The day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6); 4) "The day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8); "The day of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:30). It is particularly interesting the way Paul, when referring to the Day, can combine "Lord" and "Christ" in one expression (1 Cor 1:8); similarly "Lord" and "Jesus" (2 Cor 1:14). As Moo says, "surely this suggests that since for Paul Jesus Christ is the Lord, he uses terms such as "Day of the Lord" and "Day of Christ" interchangeably," *Posttribulation Rapture*, 248, n. 27.

the Lord, places these events at the end of the Tribulation period. In other words, he assumes a *Tribulation framework* in his discussion of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.⁵⁷ However, nowhere does Paul mention the Tribulation. Moo recognizes this and is more cautious in his appraisal, though not disagreeing with Gundry's conclusions. He writes, "The fact that the Tribulation seems not to be part of the Day suggests that it precedes all these events, but this is not certain."⁵⁸ What can be said is that Paul presents the Parousia and the Day as "a general denotation of the great future that dawns with Christ's coming."⁵⁹ Chart B may help to visualize the difference between the proposal offered here and the position of Gundry and Moo.

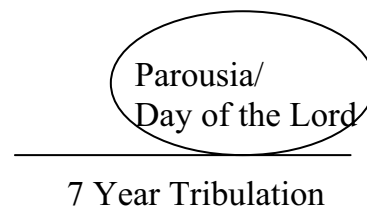
PROPOSAL



Exchatological Event-Aoristic

-Paul makes no statement as to where each aspect falls on the time line, however, his presentation allows for either pre- or post- Tribulation-ism. The presentation is general and unrefined, hence the description " Aoristic."

GUNDRY/MOO SCHEME



Eschatological Event-Precisely at the End of the Tribulation

-Paul assumes a 7 year Tribulation and thus is focusing only on the End of this time line. This demands a posttribulational rapture if Parousia and Day of the Lord are equated.

CHART B

⁵⁷ Gundry, *Tribulation*, 100-11.

⁵⁸ Moo, *Posttribulation Rapture*, 184.

⁵⁹ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outlines of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975) 530-31; cf. also George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974) 555.

Neither the structural problem of **peri de** nor the shift in terms from **parousia** to **hmera kuriou** is sufficient to disprove the literary unity of 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-5:11. However, in addition to the fact that Paul's purpose and subject matter are the same in both 4:13-18 and 5:1-11, a third reason can be given which suggests the literary unity of the entire passage.

PARALLELS BETWEEN 1 THESSALONIANS 4 AND 5 AND MATTHEW 24 AND 25

A significant reason to regard 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 as a literary unit is based on Paul's use of apocalyptic symbols throughout the passage. Many of the symbols which Paul uses can be found in the Old Testament as well as in Jewish apocalyptic material.⁶⁰ However, the imagery Paul uses bears a striking resemblance to the eschatological teaching regarding the coming of the Son of Man in the Olivet discourse of the synoptic gospels, particularly the Matthean form. Although many of the symbols do occur in Jewish apocalyptic, the figures appear in isolated texts but never all together as one finds in the Matthean parallels.

That Paul is drawing on traditional eschatological material is implied by his statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 in which he says, "We say this to you *by the word of the Lord*." A number of solutions have been offered for this difficult phrase.⁶¹ Hill is probably correct when he writes, "May it not mean, as Rigaux and others maintain,

⁶⁰ In the Old Testament (with reference to theophanic appearances and the Day of the Lord) one finds references to such imagery as *trumpets* (Exod 19:13; 20:18; Isa 27:13; Zech 9:14) and *clouds* (Exod 19:6; 24:15-18; 40:34; 1 Kg 8:10, 11; Ps 97:2; Ezek 30:3; Dan 7:13; Joel 2:2). For a discussion of the use of contemporary apocalyptic symbolism, see Neil, *Thessalonians*, 98. That Paul is not creating his own imagery can be shown from its occurrence in Jewish apocalyptic material (e.g., the figure of judgment as "travail upon an expectant mother" [cf. 1 Thess 5:3; Matt 24:8] can be found in *1 Enoch* 62:4 which says, "the pain shall come upon them as a woman in travail, and she has pain in bringing forth;" see also 4 Ezra 2:26-32; 4:40, 42. Furthermore, some of the Pauline metaphors, such as *waking and sleeping* (cf. 1 Thess 5:6-7) are found also in classical Greek (e.g., Plato, *Symp.*, 203a which says, "God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, *whether waking or sleeping*" [**kai egrhgoros i kai kaqeous i**] [Italics added]).

⁶¹ J. Jeremias suggests that the phrase refers to an agraphon (*Unknown Sayings of Jesus* [London: SPCK, 1957] 67); J. G. Davies suggests that Paul is using a saying of the exalted Jesus given to the church through one of its prophets (possibly including himself) ("The Genesis of Belief in an Imminent Parousia," *JTS* 14 [1963] 106); Neil states that Paul is drawing from a Jewish or Christian apocalyptic writing (*Thessalonians*, p. 98); Gunther Bornkamm says that the phrase means an apocryphal word of Jesus which came into existence only in the post-Easter church (*Paul* trans. D. Stalker [New York: Harper & Row, 1971] 221).

that Paul goes back, not to a single saying of Jesus but to his apocalyptic teaching as a whole, in order to validate his message and clarify the issues which agitated some of his correspondents?"⁶² In verse 15b Paul states a theological summary of "the word of the Lord" which he then gives in the following verses, drawing on traditional material into which he inserts his own unique material to suit his parenetic purpose.⁶³ Yet, he does not stop at verse 17 in his use of traditional material. He continues until 5:7. In fact, no less than sixteen parallels occur between Matthew 24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 4-5. Note the following parallels:

1. Christ Himself returns (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:30).
2. From heaven (1 Thess 4: 16 with Matt 24:30).
3. With a shout (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:30 [in power]).
4. Accompanied by angels (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:31).
5. With the trumpet of God (1 Thess 4:16 with Matt 24:31 [*trumpet* is unique to Matt in the synoptic tradition]).
6. Believers are supernaturally gathered to Christ (1 Thess 4: 17 with Matt 24:31; 40-41).
7. Believers meet the Lord (1 Thess 4:17 [**apant hs ij**] with Matt 25:1, 6 [**upant hs ij** and **apant hs ij**]).
8. In the clouds (1 Thess 4: 17 with Matt 24:30).
9. The time is unknown (1 Thess 5:1-2 with Matt 24:36); it is interesting to note that **peri de** introduces both discussions regarding the fact that the time is *unknowable*.
10. Will come as a thief (1 Thess 5:2, 4 with Matt 24:43).
11. Will come at night (1 Thess 5:2 with Matt 24:43 [*night* is unique to Matt in the synoptic tradition]).
12. Unbelievers are unaware of impending judgment (1 Thess 5:3 with Matt 24:37-39).
13. Judgment comes as travail upon an expectant mother (1 Thess 5:3 with Matt 24:8 [cf. *RSV*]).
14. Believers are not deceived (1 Thess 5:6 with Matt 24:4-5).
15. Believers are to watch (1 Thess 5:6 with Matt 24:42).
16. Warning against drunkenness (1 Thess 5:7 with Matt 24:49).

It should be noted that not only are the principal features of Paul's discussion found in the Matthean account but even the order is substantially the same. Although there are several places in the parallels

⁶² David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979) 130-31.

⁶³ For example, statements in the first person like **hmeij oi zwntej oi perileipomenoi** are possibly a reworking of the tradition as well as **kurioj**; instead of an original **uioj anqrwpou**, Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings*, 80-83.

in which the material is drawn from what scholars call the traditional Q material (cf. Matt 24:37-39; 43-44) or in which material is unique to Matthew (cf. *trumpet* in Matt 24:31 and *night* in 24:43), there are virtually no places in either Luke or Mark that contain parallels that Matthew lacks. In other words, Matthew contains all the parallels while the other gospels only contain several.

A few observations should be made regarding the parallel symbols. First, these parallels do not begin at 5:1 or at 4:16 and stop at 4:17. Instead, they begin at 4:16 and continue to 5:7. Second, the fact that the parallels are not identical always but do exhibit moderate dissimilarity suggests that underlying both Matthew 24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is an early tradition about the Parousia and resurrection with which distinct apocalyptic figures were associated, i.e., trumpet, cloud, thief, and others.⁶⁴ The dissimilarity of the imagery in both accounts may indicate that each writer has used the tradition to suit his own individual purpose. Furthermore, if this is true, it might suggest a tradition which is more dynamic (oral) rather than static (source/document).

The parallels here cited have been noticed by others, especially those of the posttribulation persuasion,⁶⁵ and have been used to demonstrate the similarity between the events of Matthew 24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 4-5. Feinberg has recognized this to be a legitimate problem for pretribulationism and thus has attempted to respond to it. He writes:

First, that there should be similarities between passages dealing with the posttribulation return of Christ and a pretribulation Rapture of the church should not surprise us. While the two events are different, they are not entirely dissimilar. The two events may be similar, but they are not the same. For me *the fact that there are differences, even if they are not contradictory, is more significant than the similarities. Second, the similarities can be maintained only if we understand the passages in their most general sense.*⁶⁶ (Italics added.)

Yet, Feinberg's effort is not convincing. He is quite atomistic in his evaluation of the apocalyptic symbols used and as a result makes

⁶⁴ Cf. J. B. Orchard, "Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels," *Bib* 19 (1938) 19-42; see also G. Henry Waterman, "The Sources of Paul's Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *JETS* 18 (1975) 105-13.

⁶⁵ Cf. William E. Bell, Jr., "A Critical Evaluation of the Pretribulation Rapture Doctrine in Christian Eschatology" (Th.D. dissertation, New York University, April 1967) 249-50; Gundry, *Tribulation*, 102-11; Moo, *Posttribulation Rapture*, 181; 190-96. This writer observed these parallels independent of any of these works in "The Literary and Theological Unity of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Texas Christian University, 1983).

⁶⁶ Feinberg, *Response to Moo*, 225.

some unguarded statements. For example, in his evaluation of the parallel regarding the association of clouds with Jesus' coming he writes, "In Matthew the Son of Man comes *on* the clouds, while in 1 Thessalonians 4 the ascending believers are *in* them."⁶⁷ (Italics added.) However, can one maintain this level of refinement when dealing with such apocalyptic symbolism? It would appear that the gospel writers did not because in the parallel accounts of Mark 13:26 and Luke 21:27 one finds **en nef el aij**; and **en nef el h** respectively. Both of these phrases have the prepositions **en** (cf. 1 Thess 4:17 which likewise uses **en**) in contrast to Matthew's use of **epi**. Also there is a distinction between the plural (Mark 13:26) and singular (Luke 21:27) use of **nef el h**. It would seem that Feinberg has failed to consider the parallel accounts of Matthew 24:30 in the other gospels. Another example of Feinberg's criticism of parallels between the Olivet Discourse and 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is his evaluation of angels in both texts. He says, "In Matthew the angels gather the elect; in 1 Thessalonians the Lord Himself gathers the believers."⁶⁸ However, an examination of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 reveals that there is not as much dissimilarity as Feinberg suggests. Paul writes, **o kurioj en keleus - ma ti . . . ka ta bhs et ai**, "the Lord will descend with a shout." Following this assertion there are two additional prepositional phrases introduced by **en** and connected by **kai**. Yet, these two phrases are linked asyndetically to **en keleus ma ti** and may suggest that the "shout" or "command" is accomplished by means of the "voice of an archangel" (**en f wh^ ar xag gel ou**) and "the, trumpet of God" (**en s a l pig gi qeou**). Marshall supports this contention by saying, "Paul is simply using standard apocalyptic imagery in which *the commands of God can be given through the intermediary of angels* (e.g. Rev. 7:2)."⁶⁹ (Italics added.)

If the parallels are not as dissimilar as Feinberg states, then does the proposal of parallels between Matthew 24-25 and 1 Thessalonians 4-5 demand a posttribulation position as Bell, Gundry, and Moo contend? I would suggest that such an interpretation is not necessarily conclusive. As has been proposed earlier, it is possible that Paul in no way is working with a refined diachronic time scheme but instead is presenting a general eschatological event which has two effects on two qualities of people, believers and unbelievers. This general nature of Paul's eschatological discussion is quite similar to the eschatological presentation of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. In that discourse there is likewise no clear diachronic scheme but instead the portrayal is

⁶⁷ Ibid., 225.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 225.

⁶⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983) 129.

very general and unrefined. In fact, one could argue that not only is Paul's presentation unrefined but that he has essentially followed the methodology of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse. John A. Sproule, regarding the prophetic methodology of Jesus, writes:

In that discourse (cf. Luke 21:20-28) the Lord describes the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the end of the age as though they were both segments of the same historical event even though almost 2,000 years have already intervened between those two events. If one compares Luke 21:20, 21 with Matthew 24:15, 16, it appears to the reader that the surrounding of Jerusalem (taken by almost all as the A.D. 70 event) and the appearance of the "abomination of desolation" (taken by almost all as the event marking the middle of Daniel's seventieth week) are the same event since both are immediately followed by the statement, "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matt 24:16; Luke 21:21). Yet they are apparently events separated in time by almost 2,000 years also. In fact, one wonders if perhaps these two events might not actually be a reference to the same event.⁷⁰

Jesus describes the Parousia without placing it on a diachronic time line. He portrays it as an event which will come at the end of the age. Like Paul's presentation in 1 Thessalonians 4-5, Jesus' presentation of His Parousia could be described as *aoristic*. Thus one would expect close similarities between the Matthean and Pauline accounts. Paul was certainly acquainted with the essential content of Jesus' discourses. As Sproule says, "Even though this discursive material may have not been committed to writing when Paul was writing his earliest epistles, it formed a significant portion of the oral tradition with which Paul would be well acquainted since much of the oral tradition had become fundamental to the very early Christian faith."⁷¹

Therefore, it is suggested that the eschatological presentations of both Jesus and Paul are in concord as to their unrefined and general nature and that each describe the Parousia without any commitment to a diachronic time scheme. Both presentations instead are more *qualitative* in nature. If this is true then the parallels between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Matthew 24-25 do not necessarily support either posttribulationism or pretribulationism. That would mean that it is possible to embrace the viability of the parallels while still advocating a pretribulational rapture position. Having proposed the viability of such parallels, it "is necessary to evaluate how they support the literary unity of the passage under discussion. It is important to note that the parallels with the Olivet Discourse do not occur just in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or in 5:1-11 but as previously noted, run throughout

⁷⁰ Sproule, *Pretribulation Defense*, 148.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

the entire passage. Furthermore, it should also be observed that these parallels are more than verbal or semantic in nature but are also structural, i.e., they exhibit similar arrangement. For that reason, I would suggest that Paul follows basically the same structure in arranging the parallels as does Matthew. The following table demonstrates the relationship.

Matthew 24 and 25	1 Thessalonians 4 and 5
Parousia Event	Parousia Event
Matthew 24:30 (Son of Man returns from heaven in power)	1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Jesus returns from heaven with a shout)
Matthew 24:31 (Son of Man attended by angels, a trumpet, and the elect are gathered trumpet, and the	1 Thessalonians 4:16 (Jesus attended by an archangel, a dead in Christ
Matthew 24:30 (Son of Man associated with clouds)	rise)
	1 Thessalonians 4:17 (Jesus and believers associated with clouds)
Time of the Day Unknown	Time of the Day Unknown
Matthew 24:36 (Nobody knows where the Day of His Parousia occurs; note the use of peri de)	1 Thessalonians 5:1 (Nobody knows when the Day of the Lord occurs; note the use of peri de)
Unexpected Nature of the Day	Unexpected Nature of the Day
Matthew 24:43 (the Parousia will occur as a thief in the night- this is the only place in which a parallel fails to correspond in order)	1 Thessalonians 5:2 (the Day of the Lord will occur as a thief in the night)
Matthew 24:37-39 (unbelievers are taken by surprise)	1 Thessalonians 5:3 (unbelievers are taken by surprise)
Exhortations to Watch	Exhortations to Watch
Matthew 24:42 * (believers are to watch)	1 Thessalonians 5:6 (believers are to watch)
Matthew 24:29 (believers are warned against drunkenness [spiritual] which is a quality of unbelief)	1 Thessalonians 5:7 (believers are by implication warned to avoid drunkenness [spiritual] which is a quality of the night [spiritual])
*The exhortation to watch is also found in Matthew 25:13 following the parable of the Bridegroom and the Virgins.	

If one assumes the essential cohesion and unity of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' discourse without disparity or disjunction (particularly at Matt 24:36), is it not reasonable to assume the same on the part of Paul? For this reason it is suggested that Paul has composed a single, uninterrupted, literary unit in harmony with Jesus' eschatological presentation in Matthew 24-25. The similarity of both verbal and structural parallels with Matthew strongly supports this conclusion.

THE INCLUSIO BETWEEN 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14 AND 5:9-10

A final reason for acknowledging literary unity between 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5:1-11 is the striking parallels which exist, between 4:13-14, 18 and 5:9-11. These two texts appear to be stylistic brackets or borders for the entire pericope. There are two reasons for arguing that 5:9-11 is an *inclusio* with 4:13-14,18.

First, it is possible that Paul employs a pre-Pauline credal formula in both 4:13-14 and 5:9-10. In 4:14 Paul writes, **Ihs ouj apeqan en kai anes th**. The use of **Ihs ouj** rather than the more **xris toj** suggests that Paul is drawing from terminology not customary to his normal vocabulary. Also Paul uses **anes th** rather than the more usual **hgerqh**. Paul uses **egeirw** much more frequently in his letters for resurrection, whether of Christ or of His people, **anis thmi** being found only here, in 4:16 and in Ephesians 5:14⁷² On the other hand, **egeirw** is used forty times by Paul, normally in the passive.⁷³ Interestingly, it appears from patristic citations that **anis thmi** continued to be used of the resurrection of Christ.⁷⁴ Thus the infrequent occurrence of the terminology in 4:13-14 suggests that Paul is drawing on foreign material. A pre-Pauline credal formula is also suggested in 5:10 by the phrase **tou apoqanont oj uper hmw n**. Bruce notes that its similarity in construction to Galatians 1:4 (an articular participle which is equivalent to a relative clause), which Bovon has discerned to be a pre-Pauline formula, might suggest that we are dealing with such a formula in 1 Thessalonians 5:10 as well.⁷⁵ Havener likewise has

⁷² One could argue that **anis thmi** occurs in Pauline preaching in Acts 17:3. However, the use there may be Lucan since he frequently employs **anis thmi** (forty four times in Acts alone while using **egeirw** twelve times).

⁷³ Cf. Best, *Thessalonians*, 187; he states that the passive suggests that "Christ is raised by God." However, note M. Zerwick who states a contrary view, *Biblical Greek*, #231.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ign. *Rom.* 4:3 (**anasths omai**); 6:1 (both **apoqanont a** and **anastanata** appear together, the same two words that occur in 1 Thess 4:14); *Barn.* 15:9 (**anes th**, the same form as in 1 Thess 4:14).

⁷⁵ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 113; he cites F. Bovon, "Une formule prepaulinienne dans l'epitre aux Galates (Ga 1, 4-5)," in *Paganism, Judaisme, Christianisme, Melanges offerts a M. Simon*, ed. A. Benoit, M. Philonenko, C. Vogel (Paris: Boccard, 1978), 91-107.

attempted to argue for pre-Pauline material in 5:10, particularly by an evaluation of the phrase "who died for us," in verse 10a.⁽⁷⁶⁾ If it is true that Paul is employing a credal formula here as well as in 4:13-14, such would mean that Paul begins and closes his eschatological discourse with a confession that the death of Jesus is the basis for eschatological hope. However, it must be admitted that such an evaluation regarding the pre-Pauline material is somewhat speculative and inconclusive.

There is a second and much stronger reason for the presence of an *inclusio*, namely, the close stylistic and semantic parallels found between 4:13-14 and 5:9-10. Note the structure indicated in Chart C.

<p>1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18</p> <p>v 13</p> <p>peri tw n xoinwmenwn</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted black;"/> <p>v 14</p> <p>ei . . . Ihs ouj apeqanen kai</p> <p>anes th . . . o qeoj</p> <p>touj koimhgent aj</p> <p>dia tou Ihs ou a cei</p> <p>s un aut &</p>	<p>1 Thessalonians 5:9-11</p> <p>vv 9-10</p> <p>eqet o . . . o qeoj</p> <p>dia . . . Ihs ou Xristou</p> <p>tou apoqanont oj uper hmwn</p> <p>. . . eite gr hgorwmen eite</p> <p>ka qeudwmen</p> <p>s un aut & zhs wmen</p>
<p>vv 15-17 (Explanatory/Confirmatory)</p>	
<p>v 18</p> <p><u>Ws te paraka leite a l l h l ouj</u></p> <p>(cf. Vv 13-17)</p>	<p>v 11</p> <p><u>Dio paraka leite a l l h l ouj</u></p> <p>(cf. v 10)</p>

CHART C

(76)Ivan Havener, "The Pre-Pauline Christological Credal Formulae of 1 Thessalonians," *SBLSPA*, vol. 20, ed. Kent H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) 115; Harnisch has provided the most detailed reasons for a suggestion of a pre-Pauline credal formula in 5:9-10. According to him, the signs of a stereotyped confession or confessional fragment include: 1) the prepositional phrases "through our Lord Jesus Christ" and "for us," 2) participial style in v. 10a, 3) the introductory **oti** in v. 9a, 4) the word **peripoihs ij** which is a *hapax legomenon* for Paul, 5) the use of the verb **eqet o** in the aorist, the tense most frequently used in confessional formulae (*Eschatological Existenz*, 122-23. To this Havener adds a sixth reason: the use of **hmaj**, since credal formulae frequently employ the first person plural of the personal pronoun (p. 117).

Although the parallels do not exhibit identical order and form, their semantic equivalence throughout argues for intentional parallelism. In each passage the death of Christ (**a peqa nen** and **a poqa not oj**) is the basis for the believer's hope of life with Him. Each text stresses the believer's presence "with Christ" (**s un a ut &**). Each text asserts that Jesus is the intermediate agent through whom God performs the action (**dia . . . Ihs ou**). Also, God is the author of both actions (**o qeoj acei** and **o qeoj eqet o**). Furthermore, in verses 13-17 the major problem is the relation of the dead to the Parousia, i.e., verses 13-17 give the essential assertion, followed by an explanation in verses 15-17. Then verse 18 follows with an exhortation "to comfort one another." In the same manner, 1 Thessalonians 5:10 reiterates the same promise of 4:13-17, i.e., the believer will live with Christ, and then verse 11 follows with the corresponding exhortation "to comfort one another." There is, however, one obstacle to the parallelism and that is the identification of the nuance of **ka qeudw** in 5:10.

Can **ka qeudw** be equated with **koima w** in 4:13-14? Paul normally uses **koima w** when he employs the metaphor of sleep for the death of the believer.⁷⁷ Furthermore, he uses **ka qeudw** for *spiritual insensibility* in 5:6. For this reason, Edgar⁷⁸ and Kaye⁷⁹ have argued that Paul uses the verb with reference to spiritual insensibility in 5:10. However, there is good evidence to the contrary, namely, that Paul uses the verb to mean "death" and hence it is to be taken as a synonym with **koima w** in 4:13-14.⁸⁰

First, although **ka qeudw** is not used elsewhere by Paul as a metaphor for death, the verb is used this way in biblical Greek. Particularly interesting is Daniel 12:2 (LXX) which says, "many of them that *sleep* (**t wn da qeudont wn**) in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproach and everlasting shame."⁸¹ In fact, in light of the eschatological nature of Daniel 12:2 (cf. **zwhn a iwnion**), it is possible that Paul is alluding to it and therefore employs the same terminology (this would not be a problem given the aoristic nature of Paul's eschatological presentation). The verb **ka qeudw** is also most likely a reference to death in Mark 5:39, Matthew 9:24, and Luke 8:52. In these texts the account is given of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter from the dead.⁸² One thing, however, is important, namely,

⁷⁷ Cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13, 14, 15.

⁷⁸ Thomas Edgar, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10," *JETS* 22 (1979) 345-49.

⁷⁹ B. N. Kaye, "Eschatological and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *NovT* 17 (1975) 52.

⁸⁰ See Tracy L. Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep' in 1 Thessalonians 5:10-A Reappraisal," *GTJ* 6 (1985) 337-48.

⁸¹ The Theodotion text also uses **t wn ka qeudont wn** as a reference to those who have died but who will experience resurrection (see *The Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1935], 935).

⁸² For a full discussion of this point, see Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep,'" 340.

the nuance of "death" is not out of concord with the semantic field of the verb **ka qeudw**. Second, the context of 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 warrants the nuance of "death" for **ka qeudw**. To render it simply as "spiritual insensibility" weakens greatly the preceding exhortations. If one did give **ka qeudw** such a nuance, a paraphrase of verse 10 might be, "although I desire you to maintain spiritual alertness in view of the imminent Parousia, Jesus died so that whether we are spiritually insensible or not, we still might live with Him." Bruce draws a similar conclusion when he writes, "It is *ludicrous* to suppose that the writers mean, 'whether you live like sons of light or sons of darkness, it will make little difference: you will be alright in the end.'" ⁸³ (Italics added.) The weakening of the previous series of hortatory subjunctives is obvious (cf. vv. 6, 8). Third, Paul has already used **ka qeudw** in verses 6-7 in two different ways (v. 6 metaphorically and v. 7 literally).⁸⁴ Thus for Paul to give it a nuance of "death" would not be surprising at all since he has previously used the verb with two different nuances in the same context. In fact, he may be employing an intentional word play with the uses in verses 6 and 7. Fourth, the nuance of "death" for **ka qeudw** in verse 10 is supported by the majority of both commentators and lexicographers.⁸⁵ Finally, as noted above, the numerous parallels which already exist between 4:13-14 and 5:9-10 likewise I argue that **ka qeudw** is parallel to **koima w** in 4:13-14. Consequently, the probability of an *inclusio* between 4:13-14 and 5:9-10 strongly suggests the essential unity of the entire pericope.

It has been proposed that parallels exist between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Matthew 24-25. The suggestion has also been made that Paul employs an *inclusio* between 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 and 5:9-10. If both of these observations are combined Chart D offers a clear display of the literary unity of the entire passage.

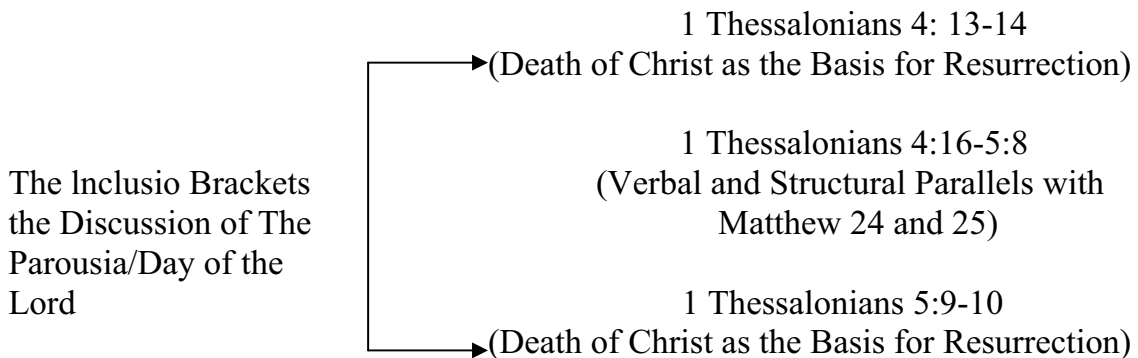


CHART D

⁸³ Bruce, *Thessalonians*, 114.

⁸⁴ BAGD, 388.

⁸⁵ See Howard, "The Meaning of 'Sleep,'" 346, n. 25.

It would appear that Paul has bracketed off his discussion of the coming Parousia/Day of the Lord with a reminder that the basis for the hope of believers (both alive and dead) is the death and resurrection of Christ. Such may suggest that this is the main issue behind the entire eschatological discourse. Based on this hope, Paul can exhort these believers to "comfort one another" (cf. 4:18 and 5:11).

SUMMARY

Several reasons have been offered for taking 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 as one literary unit and not as two distinct units separated by **peri de** in 5:1. First, it has been suggested that Paul's purpose is the same in both, namely, parenetic. Paul points out the different effects the Parousia/Day of the Lord will have on those with different spiritual conditions (believers and unbelievers). Second, Paul appears to be describing a single *aoristic* event from two perspectives. For the believer it will be a time of blessing and thus Paul uses the word Parousia, whereas for the unbeliever it will be a time of judgment and hence Paul shifts his terminology to Day of the Lord. The third and fourth reasons are most significant. The parallels exhibited with the Olivet Discourse along with the *inclusio* between 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 and 5:9-10 support the present thesis, namely, that the entire passage is a single literary unit. Thus there is no reason to regard 5:1-11 either as a non-Pauline interpolation, a passage written later to counter gnostic threats, an example of the literary form *topos*, or as a reference to a different situation and event than that found in 4:13-18.

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