

"Stand firm and hold fast" — to the genuine apostolic teachings, believing the truth with the inner witness of the Spirit. The antidote to the deception warned against in v.3.

16-17 May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal

SUMMARY Paul with Silas and Timothy is writing again to the church they founded in Thessalonica to encourage them at a time of external persecution and internal conflict, fuelled by false teachers untruthfully attributing their erroneous teaching to the apostles. This is a warning that deception will come, and everything needs to be tested against Scripture and the true apostolic teaching they have received.

APPLICATION This is a fellowship of people who had found salvation and new life through an encounter with Jesus and who knew the encouragement and empowering of His Holy Spirit. Yet this Christian life was not easy for them. They experienced persecution on the outside, often from religiously inflexible Jews. But the greater danger was deception from cerebral teaching which was not rooted in Scripture or the careful instruction of the apostles who had lived with Jesus. Sincere, Jesus-trusting believers today can find themselves being 'cancelled' by religious-minded people of no great faith, and there is always danger from teaching which presumes to guide, without the compass bearings of the eternal truth of the Word of God. This passage encourages us to stand firm, holding to what Scripture plainly says and testing every sermon against it.

QUESTION *If Jesus is Lord of one church, why are there more than 40,000 denominations worldwide? Where do we find the unity which Jesus seeks, in the diverse streams of faith that we encounter?*

PRAYER Lord, we reflect on how Your devoted people in every age – in Bible times, and in each century of the Christian church – have experienced discouragement and opposition. And we hear You speaking through these Scriptures about this strategy of the enemy of our souls.

Forgive us for being easily led astray through pride in our own opinions. Help us to humbly seek fresh wisdom and revelation of You in our hearts.

Give us a new hunger for Your Word and Your truth, and a thirst for Your Spirit to be encouraging us to apply it rightly and lovingly in our lives and our world. Through and in Jesus we pray. Amen.

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encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

"Encourage... and strengthen" — Paul's prayer goes with Timothy's visit, to strengthen the resolve of Thessalonian believers to hold on to what they know to be true, against false teaching within and persecution outside.

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PRINT EDITION

Bible readings for November 6, 2022, commentary & references

Non-denominational Bible study for **Sunday, Nov. 6**, using Revised Common Lectionary readings

• Read the Bible passages beforehand. • Reflect. • Re-read later to think about the message preached

Theme: **God's word of truth stands against opposition in every age**

Psalms 145:1-5, 17-21

Haggai 2:1-9 – God's word speaks encouragement to the former exiles

Luke 20:27-38 – Sadducees take issue with Jesus about the afterlife

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 – How to guard against wrong teaching

Haggai 2:1-9 – God's word speaks encouragement to the former exiles

The Lord's purpose is restoring true faith and worship despite opposition

1 On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai:

"The word of the Lord came" — in Haggai's second message of encouragement to the governor and the high priest.

2-3 "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?'

"Former glory" — of Solomon's temple, destroyed 66 years previously.

"Seem to you like nothing" — just the foundation, hardly a glorious sight.

4 "But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty.

"Be strong" — echoing what God said to Moses' successor Joshua, and to Solomon building the first temple.

• For further study: [Joshua 1:6-7,9,18](#); [1 Chron. 28:20](#).

5 "This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'

"What I covenanted" — lit. "the word I cut with you", a phrase which links Haggai's prophecy to God's covenant.

6 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.

Psalms 145:1-5, 17-21

1 I will exalt You, my God the King; I will praise Your name for ever and ever.

2-3 Every day I will praise You and extol Your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom.

4-5 One generation commends Your works to another; they tell of Your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendour of Your majesty – and I will meditate on Your wonderful works.

17-18 The Lord is righteous in all His ways and faithful in all He does. The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.

19-20 He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and saves them. The Lord watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever.

"Once more shake" — looking back to Egypt's judgment at the Red Sea, and forwards to the coming fall of Persia to Greece, then Greece to Rome and ultimately the judgment of the nations at Christ's second coming. Hebrews 12:26-27.

7 "I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the Lord Almighty.

"Fill... with glory" — can mean wealth, like King Darius' contribution, Ezra 6:8, but more often God's spiritual presence, evident as never before when Christ came to the temple, Mark 11:1-11, 15-19; cf. John. 1:1-18; 2:19-22.

SUMMARY Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua are heading up about 50,000 returning exiles in Jerusalem. New foundations have been laid to rebuild the ruined temple. Haggai's prophetic word speaks God's encouragement to rekindle the resolve to continue the work despite opposition.

APPLICATION When God speaks to us it is often through Scripture, sometimes taking historic words and re-applying them to our situation with fresh meaning, as Haggai does in saying "Be strong". We see here the partnership of Word and Spirit that we will meet again later.

QUESTION *Today, what helps us discern what God may be saying in confusing conflicts that we face?*

Luke 20:27-38 – Sadducees take issue with Jesus about the afterlife

He reminds them that God speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as living

27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.

"Sadducees" — aristocratic controlling group of priesthood and Sanhedrin who did not believe the oral tradition or in an afterlife. This controversy arose in a long day of attacks on Jesus' teaching.

28 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

"Marry the widow" — to maintain the name and property through children, Deut. 25:5-6; Ruth 4:1-12.

29-33 "Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. The second and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. Finally, the woman died too. Now then, at the

8 "The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.

9 "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

"The glory... greater" — the promise of "greater glory" and "peace" fulfilled through the prince of peace, Jesus, Zech 9:9-10; John 20:19-21; Col. 1:20. Jesus' temple, now the church, includes people from all nations, Eph. 2:11-22.

resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

"Seven brothers" — a far-fetched example intended to ridicule the idea of resurrection. A similar story appears in the OT apocrypha.

34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.

"Given in marriage" — for this earthly life, not for eternity as Jesus continues to teach.

35-36 "But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection.

"In the resurrection" — a resurrected body does not age, Acts 13:33-35, and does not need children to continue the line.

37-38 "But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of

Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive."

SUMMARY It is the last week of Jesus life and He is spending it teaching in the temple courts — and meeting His greatest opposition. In this episode, members of the Sadducee party, who controlled the temple and the Sanhedrin, are remonstrating with Jesus from their position of not accepting Scripture's authority apart from the first five books attributed to Moses, and not believing in the afterlife or resurrection. He refutes their argument using the clear words of Moses which they can hardly dismiss.

APPLICATION Discussions about what we believe or don't believe, apart from the benchmark of respecting the truth of God's word, are powerless philosophical debates. Jesus always takes us back to the Word and encourages us, as He did, to believe what it says and rely on the Holy Spirit to help us understand and apply what we are hearing.

QUESTION *Do we lean to Scripture as our yardstick, or to our own opinions and the emphases of our tradition? What would Jesus say to us?*

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 – How to guard against wrong teaching

Weak faith and holding Scripture lightly invites deception into the church

1-2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us — whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter — asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.

"Teaching allegedly from us" — from its inception the young Christian church was undermined by teachers of uncertain faith who untruthfully claimed support for their deceptive ideas from the now-distant apostles.

3-4 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

"Don't let anyone deceive you" — highlighting the real danger of deception: by definition, hearers are unaware that they are being deceived.

"The man doomed to destruction... will oppose" —

"Moses showed that the dead rise" — Jesus used the books of Moses, the only Scripture the Sadducees recognised, to show how resurrection was taught in Moses' own words.

not Satan but one used by him. An awareness of God's word as truth is the safeguard and those who hold truth lightly are vulnerable (vv.9-10).

"In God's temple" — an expression used elsewhere by Paul for the church or individual believer, warning of deception from within the worshipping community.

5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?

13-14 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first-fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Saved through... Spirit and...belief in the truth" — The Spirit is mute without the Word, and the Word is not living or transforming without the Spirit.

"God chose you" — trinitarian: the Son loves, God the Father elects, and the Spirit makes holy.

15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.