

NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK¹

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PASSAGE: _____

Instructions: Use this template for your investigation of either Jonah or 1 Thessalonians. Word step by step and answer each question using good observational skills. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps. This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is your personal study and the work product that you will use for the final project at the end of this course.

STEP 6. CULTURAL CONTEXT

6.1 List features of your text that you suspect might be clarified by a greater knowledge of Jewish or Greco-Roman history and culture.

1. **The City of Thessalonica 1:1**
2. **Geography 1 Thess. 2:14**
3. **Social Customs 1 Thess. 2:16**
4. **Paul’s apostolic practice 1 Thess. 2:1-12**
5. **Paul’s ethical advice 1 Thess. 4:1-8**
6. **Paul’s teaching on the rapture 1 Thess. 4:13—5:11**

6.2 Choose one of these and, using the bibliography in Duvall and Hayes (pp. 120-134), explore the cultural background a little further and explain how this study may aid in an understanding of the cultural milieu of the author.

Paul was giving ethical advice to the believers in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a leading provincial city and the seat of Roman administration. The city had a strong Jewish presence, and there were several active religious cults. These cults included Serapis, Cabiri, and the imperial cult, whose priests play a significant role in the city. In Greco-Roman society, which embraced adultery, temple prostitution, and physical gratification at the expense of others, Paul urged believers to avoid such behaviors “that each should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor.” Rather than engaged in a lustful life which is against the will of God. In studying the cultural background and knowing the culture in which Paul wrote, his letter helps one to understand the reason why Paul emphasized certain topics in his letter since he knew the social environment of the young church.

6.3 Evaluate the significance of this background data for the understanding of your passage.

¹ Adapted from Dr. William Barclay, Gordon Conwell

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/charlotte/current/documents/chareg-nt502-barclay-su12.pdf> Accessed Sept. 1, 2016. Also, Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) and, J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001, 2020).

The significance of the background data is that it sheds light on the inhabitants of the city of Thessalonica; Jews, as well as several cults, the latter, indulging in various immoral and unethical behaviors which were pervasive during this period. It is significant for the understanding of the passage 1 Thess. 5:1-11 and why Paul delivered that message. He encouraged them to steer clear of the immoral behaviors and to look forward to the future. The passage distinguishes the teachings of the rapture from the varied teachings of the cults. It emphasizes the expectation of the afterlife. With adherences to Paul's teachings, believers have the certainty of the return of the Lord; and the assurance that whether they are alive or dead, Christ will return for them, and they will be reunited with him and their loved ones who have passed away in the Lord.