

March 2013



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- **Getting Situated with Bible Geography**
- **Knowing the Prophets**
- **Prayer Corner**
- **Spiritual Gleanings**
- **What's on at GSDA?**

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The Biblical Institute Newsletter

A Publication of the Biblical Institute and Women's Ministry of the Georgetown Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Studying 1 & 2 Thessalonians

First Century Thessalonica – Paul arrived in Thessalonica, the provincial capital of Macedonia, in about A.D. 49/50. Having traveled from Philippi along the Egnatian Way (see map), the apostle entered a city whose geographical, historical, social and cultural background made it ideal for the spread of the gospel. Thessalonica in Paul's day had been rebuilt on the site of the ancient Greek city of Therma. It was Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who expanded the ancient city of Therma in the fourth century (316/315 B.C.) and renamed the city Thessalonica in honor of his wife, Thessalonice. The city of Thessalonica became an administrative center when Macedonia was made a province of the Roman Empire in 148 B.C. When Paul arrived at Thessalonica about A.D. 49/50, the city was an Aegean seaport actively importing and exporting goods, and was composed of a diverse population of people, including Macedonians, Greeks,

Romans, Asians, Barbarians, and Jews. This diverse population produced a diverse religious environment in which Paul declared the gospel of Jesus Christ among those who practiced mystery religions, civic cults, traditional Greek religions, and Judaism. Those who practiced mystery religions emphasized rites of initiation, fertility and cultic prostitution, afterlife and immortality, cultic feasts, and stories of dying and rising gods such as Cabirus. Those who adhered to civic cults practiced the worship of political figures such as Alexander the Great or the Roman emperor. The practice of traditional Greek religions included devotion to and worship of gods in the Olympian Pantheon such as Zeus, Asclepius, Aphrodite, and Demeter. Ancient Judaism as

it was practiced in Thessalonica is represented in Acts 17, when Paul, having found a synagogue, performed his usual custom of attending Sabbath worship. Three successive Sabbaths Paul challenged the Jews of Thessalonica with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many heard and accepted the gospel message. The church grew into a thriving community of faith composed of Jews, "devout Greeks" and of "chief women" of Thessalonica.¹



The Egnatian Way began on the Adriatic coast and extended eastward across Macedonia to Thessalonica on the Aegean Sea and from there to Philippi.

Preparing to Study 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Paul in Thessalonica

Paul established the Church at Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. Paul left Philippi and traveled along the Egnatian Way to Thessalonica. His traveling companions were Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1). It was a journey on foot that took about four to five days. The story in Acts indicates that Paul may have spent only three weeks in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2) before he encountered opposition that forced him from the city (Acts 17:5-10). Acts' indication of only three weeks may refer to Paul's witnessing in the synagogues, as was his habit, before he was expelled from the synagogues, and then turning his ministry of the gospel to Thessalonica's Gentile community. This pattern and order in his ministry is exemplified in his work in Corinth (Acts 18:4-7) and in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). A summary of Paul's message delivered in the synagogues of Thessalonica is in Acts 17:3, where he demonstrated from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ) that the Jews had awaited, a

Messiah who had to suffer, and rise from the dead. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles of Thessalonica also proclaimed a Jesus raised from the dead, but had additional points (1 Thess 1:9-10). Paul urged the Gentiles to (1) turn from idols, (2) serve only the living and true God, and (3) place their trust and hope in Jesus, the one



An 1898 photo of part of the Egnatian Way. Paul travelled from Philippi to Thessalonica via the Egnatian Way. Photo in the Public Domain, No known restrictions, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

who God raised from the dead so as to deliver them from the wrath to come. During Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, he supported himself through his work, tent making (1 Thess 2:9-10, Acts 18:3). He also received support from the congregation at Philippi (Phil 4:15-16). He may also have received support from persons in Thessalonica, like Jason who had opened his home to the

early church at Thessalonica as a place to meet (Acts 17:5). Paul was eventually driven out of Thessalonica under duress brought on by some of the Jews who stirred up some of the local populace² who later stormed Jason's home in search of Paul (Acts 17:5). Not finding Paul, the crowd took Jason instead and brought him before the rulers (politarchs) of the city (Acts 17:6). Jason was charged with complicity, having received members of the Thessalonian church into his home; and he and his companions were charged with sedition, having received Christians into his home who "turned the world upside down" (KJV). These Christians recognized Jesus as king rather than Rome's Caesar (Acts 17:6-7). Jason was required to put down a security payment (Acts 17:9), possibly to guarantee that Christians would no longer be a threat to the peace of Rome. As for Paul, he and Silas, left Thessalonica and went to Berea, just south of Thessalonica (Acts 17:10). Insistent, Paul's enemies from Thessalonica followed him to Berea, but "brethren" in Berea helped Paul to escape to Athens, while Timothy and Silus temporarily



The Romans constructed the Egnatian roadway in the 2nd century B.C. It was a little more than 19 feet wide and paved with stone slabs and layers of sand.

remained in Berea until receiving a summons from Paul to join him in Athens (Acts 17:14-15). Paul indicates that Satan continually prevented him from returning to Thessalonica, but that did not stop him from sending Timothy back to Thessalonica. Timothy's report back to Paul on the Thessalonian congregation is thought to have given rise to Paul's writing his first letter to the Thessalonians from Corinth. This first letter (epistle) indicates that the church at Thessalonica struggled with many issues. These issues ranged from temptations to fall back into previous patterns of idolatry and immorality (1 Thess. 4:1-8); concerns regarding deceased members (1 Thess. 4:13-18); Jewish and Christian relations in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:14-16); consideration of the second coming (1 Thess. 5:1-11); to persecutions and suffering (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; 3:3-5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:5-7).

¹The Greek text reads "worshipping Greeks," which the KJV translates as "devout Greeks." These worshipping Greeks were those who feared God and attended the synagogues, but were not full converts to the ancient Hebrew religion. Women were often times very influential in Greek cities, having held positions of esteem as indicated in archaeological inscriptions honoring them. ²The Greek text reads "the people of the market, men some evil," which the KJV translates as "lewd fellows of the baser sort."

The Church at Thessalonica struggled with issues. These issues that the early Christian community of faith at Thessalonica struggled with deserve careful attention because such issues and struggles of that early community still speak to the Church today.

Getting Situated with Bible Geography



Sunrise on the Sea of Galilee (1950)
Photo in the Public Domain, No known restrictions, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Galilee and Its Sea

A setting sun bathes the Sea of Galilee with incandescent light that shimmers off a body of blue water. The Sea of Galilee is also referred to as the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1), the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), and the Sea of Chinnereth (Num 34:11). The Sea of Galilee was a geographical focal point in Jesus' ministry. On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught multitudes, fed thousands, and healed many (Mat 15:29-38; John 6:1-13; Mark 7:31-35). Much of Jesus' ministry took place in Galilee along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee.



Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee (1950)
Photo in the Public Domain, No known restrictions, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The Sea of Galilee is in the northern part of Palestine, and is part of the Great Rift Valley, a large fissure in the earth's crust that extends from Syria, southward through Palestine, to the plains of East Africa. The Sea of Galilee at its greatest length is about thirteen miles long, and at its greatest width is about eight miles wide. In the hills just north of the Sea is Capernaum. Southwest of the Sea is the city of Tiberias named after the Roman emperor and built in A.D. 18 by Herod Antipas. Tiberias in the Old Testament was called Rakkath and was located in the

tribal area of Naphtali (Joshua 19:35). The Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee, moves through the Jordan Valley, and finally flows into the Dead Sea, some sixty-five miles south of the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is over 680 feet below the sea level of the Mediterranean Sea, and is ringed by high mountains some reaching as high as 2,000 feet. Icy water from the snow-capped peaks of Mount Hermon flows downward in the foothills to form one of four sources of the headwaters of the Jordan River that then flows into the Sea of Galilee just east of Caper-

naum. First century Roman Galilee was a large and prosperous area. Jesus had departed Nazareth for Galilee so that he would fulfill the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 9:1; Matt 4:12-17). Galilee included the cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Cana. Capernaum was a center for Jesus' ministry in Galilee. It was in Capernaum that Jesus healed the man who had an unclean spirit (Luke 4:31-36; Mark 1:21-28), healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Luke 4:38-39), and received the request of the Roman centurion to heal his servant (Luke 7:1-10). The city of Capernaum, however, rejected Jesus' works and teachings, to which Jesus declared of the city "You shall be brought down to Hades," (Matt 11:23). Bethsaida (meaning 'house of fishermen') was one of the cities of "woe," as was Capernaum, because of its refusal to accept Jesus' works and message (Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13). In Cana of Galilee, Jesus



Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, landing place, John 6:17 (1950) Photo in the Public Domain, No known restrictions, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

turned water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11). Jesus called eleven of his twelve disciples (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16) from the area of Galilee (Matt 28:16), the only exception was Judas, who was a Judean. Indeed, the spoken dialect of Galileans was so distinct that Jews from Jerusalem could identify Galileans simply from their speech pattern and mannerisms (Matt 26:69-73).

Knowing the Prophets

Jeremiah's Metaphors

Jeremiah the prophet was the son of Hilkiah, a priest who lived in the village of Anathoth, just north of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's ministry began during the reign of King Josiah of Judah in 627 B.C. and stretched across the reigns of five Judean kings.³ Jeremiah used many metaphors when expressing God's message to the people and the kings of Judah. The primary metaphor Jeremiah used was that of a marriage between God and the people of Judah. The metaphor of marriage portrayed God as the husband and Judah as the unfaithful wife (bride). The marriage metaphor was able to invoke the depth of Judah's infidelity to its God.

The word of the Lord came to me: "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "This is what the Lord says: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the wilderness. (Jer 2:1-2 NIV)

Jeremiah used the metaphor of water to describe the relationship between the people of Judah and God. Jeremiah pictured God as living flowing water, but the people of Judah forsook their God and perused after and worshiped ["dug their own cisterns"] other gods who are pictured as broken water vessels ["cisterns"] that cannot even hold water.

³ The five kings were Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

"A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them."

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, 2003

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (Jer 2:13 NIV)

Jeremiah used the metaphor of water again to describe Judah's king and army's request for help from the Egyptians in their fight against the Babylonians, as drinking water from the Nile River, and Judah's plea for help from Assyria, as drinking water from the Euphrates River.

Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Nile? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the Euphrates? (Jer 2:18 NIV)

Jeremiah uses three metaphors to describe the judgment against of Judah, the bride and wife, who abandoned her husband, God. Three metaphors were used to describe Judah's judgment as (1) a burning fire that could be quenched, (2) a devouring lion, and (3) a hot wind.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it.

7 A lion has come out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out. He has left his place to lay waste your land. Your towns will lie in ruins without inhabitant.

11 At that time this people and Jerusalem will be told, "A scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward my



"Jeremiah" (1780's) Etched study for wing of altarpiece made for Royal Chapel, Windsor by artist Benjamin West, (1738-1820). Photo in the Public Domain, No known restrictions, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Prayer Corner

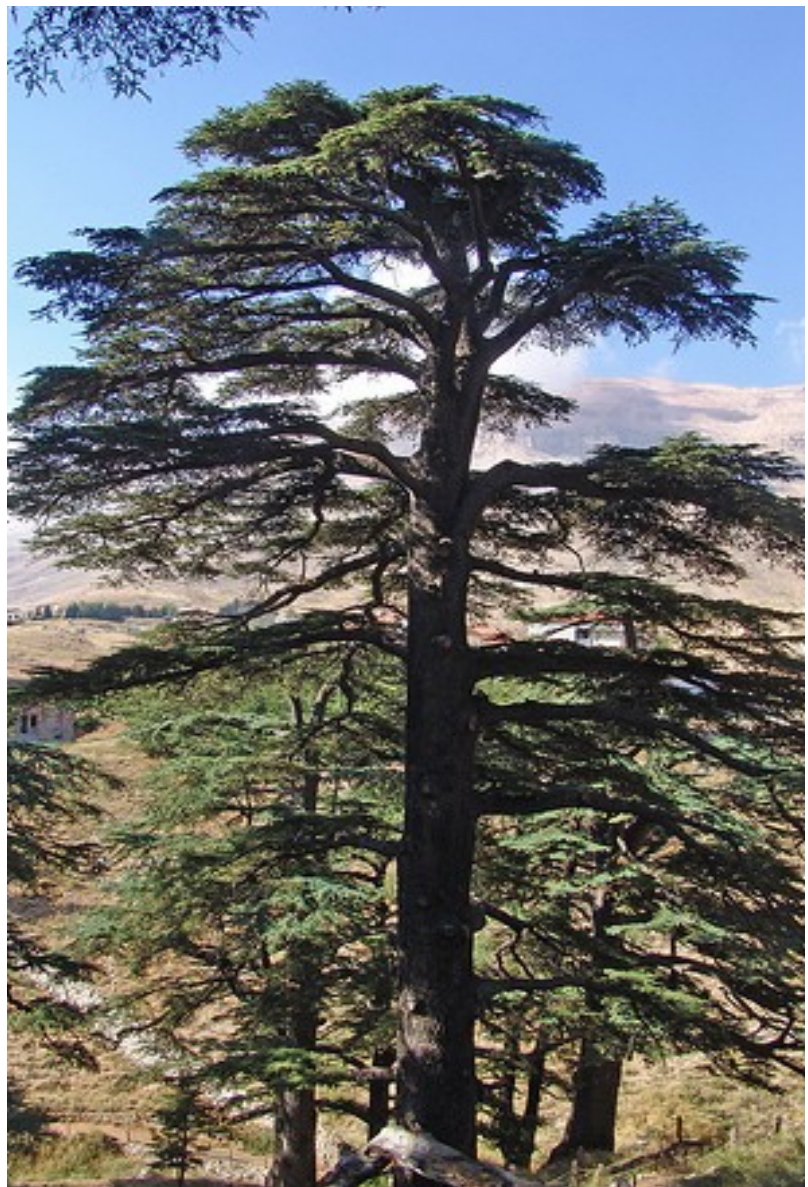
Prayer in Luke's Gospel

The greater occurrence of references to prayer in Luke's gospel, compared with the gospels of Matthew and Mark, reveals Luke's interest in prayer. It is in Luke's gospel that Jesus is portrayed as offering the model prayer (Luke 11:2-4, cf. Matt 6:9-13), specifically in response to his disciples' request of him to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Prayer as a primary ingredient in the life of discipleship is presented in the parable of the widow and the judge (Luke 18:1-14). This parable occurs only in Luke's gospel. In this parable Jesus addresses his disciples on the necessity for unrelenting perseverance in prayer (18:1). Luke 11:4 and 22:40 emphasize the necessity to pray for deliverance from temptation, and thus underscores Luke 18:1 where Jesus instructs his disciples to pray always. It is in Luke 22:46 that Jesus instructs his disciples to pray rather than to sleep or wait (compare Matt 26:36, 38; Mark 14:32) as he goes to pray so that they would not be led in to temptation. Luke's portrayal of prayer fits not only the urgency of Jesus' ministry to proclaim the kingdom of God (4:18, 43; 10:9, 11), but confirms the necessity that a disciple of Jesus' must persevere in a faith of unceasing prayer. Luke's version of Jesus' example of how to pray (11:2-4) in comparison to Matthew's version (6:9-13) reveals Luke's move to make prayer a normative part of discipleship. In addition to portraying Jesus as the exemplar of prayer, Luke undergirds the call to pray unceasingly with texts that promise God's certain answer to the cries of the elect (11:5-13; 18:1-8), and confronts the need for earnest (22:44) prayer lest faith fail (18:1; 21:36).

Spiritual Gleanings

The Cedars of Lebanon

The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted (Psalm 104:16).



Cedars of Lebanon can grow over 100 feet tall and have trunks up to 40 feet across.

King Solomon built the Temple using cedars from Lebanon (1 Kgs 5:2-10),⁴ and — “the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers, all was cedar; there was no stone seen” (1 Kgs 6:18). The cedars of Lebanon used to construct the Temple of God in Solomon’s time convey a spiritual meaning for the present. Those who are made righteous in Christ will grow in spiritual height and strength because they are the Temple of God through the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:21-22), just as the cedars of Lebanon planted of God (Ps 104:16) grew to glorious heights, and took on magnificent strength, enough to be used for construction in the Temple of God. All those called into God’s righteousness will “flourish like a palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon” (Ps 92:12). Because of the size and strength of the cedar trees of Lebanon, often times their im-

age was used by the prophets as a metaphor to express strength and power. Ezekiel used the image of a cedar tree of Lebanon to describe the might and majesty of Assyria: “Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and

tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.” It was the prophet Hosea who used the image of Lebanon’s cedars to declare God’s forgiveness and blessing of Israel — “Israel shall . . . cast forth his roots as

cedar, and takes a tender sprig from the top of the cedar and plants it on a high mountain (Mount Zion, Jerusalem) in Israel (Ezek 17:22-23). The sprig grows into a ‘noble’ cedar that produces fruit and under whose branches all the birds of every kind (all peoples of all nations) will dwell (v. 23). This prophecy in the book of Ezekiel joins with other prophetic passages describing the anointed one (Christ) as a “branch,” “twig,” or “sprout” (Isa 4:2; 11:1-10; 53:2; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12). These prophetic passages culminate in Jesus’s declaration: “I am the vine and my Father is the vinedresser” (John 15:1). Jesus the “vine” imparts to his ‘branches’ sap to strengthen and heighten them to be his fruitful disciples. God the father prunes each ‘branch’ so that each will bring forth more fruit. (15:2).⁵



General view of the cedars of Lebanon (1890)

his top was among the thick boughs” (Ezek 31:3). But might and strength of Lebanon’s cedars was in no comparison to that of God, declares the prophet Zechariah (11:1-2) — “Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir

Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.” Finally, the image of the cedar tree is used in declaring God’s anointed one. A great eagle (God [Yahweh]) takes the highest branch from a high

⁴ King David’s palace was built from cedar trees of Lebanon (Tyre), 2 Sam 5:11. ⁵ cf. Rev 14:18-20 where those who are not of Jesus are portrayed as clusters of grapes, ripe for throwing into the winepress of God’s wrath to be trampled upon.

What's on at
GSDA?

Revival and REFORMATION

@ The Georgetown Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Web: georgetownadventist.org

Directions: We are located at 5105 South IH-35 on the east access road. If coming from the north on IH-35, take exit #257, cross the highway and go north on the access road; if you are coming from the

DATE	DAY	TIME	TOPIC
April 12	Friday	6:55 pm	1. How can you know the Future?
April 13	Saturday	11:15 am	2. The God of Creation
		6:30 pm	3. What is Going on here?
		7:30 pm	4. What happened on the Cross?
April 14	Sunday	6:55 pm	5. Signs of the End
April 15	Monday	6:55 pm	6. Rescue
April 16	Tuesday	6:55 pm	7. A Better Way!
April 17	Wednesday		F R E E D A Y
April 18	Thursday	6:55 pm	8. God's Indestructible Sign
April 19	Friday	6:55 pm	9. History's Greatest Cover up
April 20	Saturday	11:15 am	10. How to start over
		6:30 pm	11. What happens when we die?
		7:30 pm	12. Where will you spend Millennium?
April 21	Sunday	6:55 pm	13. The Lamb of God
April 22	Monday	6:55 pm	14. Good News from Courtroom
April 23	Tuesday	6:55 pm	15. Why so many churches?
April 17	Wednesday		F R E E D A Y
April 25	Thursday	6:55 pm	16. The Coming of the Comforter
April 26	Friday	6:55 pm	17. Welcome in the Family