

1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

“Opening Greetings”

“Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the [assembly] of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Yeshua the Messiah in the presence of our God and Father.”

The Apostle Paul’s opening greetings to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians do more than just inform these ancient Believers how appreciative and thankful that Paul and his ministry associates are for their steadfast faith and ongoing labor in the gospel.¹ There is an assertion made about the nature of the Supreme Being that they serve. The *ekklēsia* or assembly of the Thessalonians was one found “in God the Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Thessalonians 1:1). While this established its origins in a King other than Caesar, a single preposition, *en* (ἐν), is used here to denote the relationship of the Father and Son:² *en Theō Patri kai Kurīō Iēsou Christō* (ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ), “in God [the] father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (Brown and Comfort).³

As is typical to the opening of much of the Pauline Epistles (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; Philemon 3), the Father is represented with the title “God” (*theos*, θεός) and Yeshua the Messiah is represented with the title “Lord” (*kurios*, κύριος). Here, it needs to be recognized that with Yeshua taking the title *Kurios* (κύριος), He is given the very title that rendered the Divine Name YHWH (יהוה) throughout the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Tanach. We should each be reminded of how Paul reworks the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4 in 1 Corinthians 8:6, where he says, “for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.” The relationship, that the Father and Son have together, places them both as members of the Godhead. It is difficult to maneuver around the fact that titles which would normally be served for God proper in the Tanach, are applied in a balanced manner to both the Father and the Son in 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Yeshua could have just been titled with “King” or *basileus* (βασιλεύς), the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *melekh* (מֶלֶךְ), and a more distant relationship between the Father and the Son would be seen.

Noting the presence of the preposition *en*, Fee observes how “This is...[one] of many instances where one preposition controls the twofold object of God and Christ, where the two...are seen to be in the closest union regarding divine activities,”⁴ as the Thessalonians are “‘in’ both the Father and the Son simultaneously.”⁵ Morris also concludes, “throughout these two Epistles [Paul] constantly associates the Father and the Son in the closest of fashions (cf. v. 3; 3:11-13; 5:18; II Thess. 1:1, 2, 8, 12; 2:16 f.; 3:5...). No higher view could possibly be taken of the Person of Christ.”⁶

Per the close association of the Father and the Son, which opens 1 Thessalonians, commendatory remarks are issued further on by Paul, specifically in how, “Having so fond an

¹ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic*.

² F.F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians*, Vol 45 (Waco TX: Word Books, 1982), 7.

³ Brown and Comfort, 709.

⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶ Leon Morris, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 48.

affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:8-9). There are two references here witnessed to *to euangelion tou Theou* (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ; 1 Thessalonians 2:8) and *to euangelion tou Theou* (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ; 1 Thessalonians 2:9), “the gospel of God” (NASU) or “the Good News of God” (TLV). But in 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul writes about how “we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Messiah, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.” Here, the reference is made to *tō euangeliō tou Christou* (τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ), “the gospel of Christ” (NASU) or “the Good News of Messiah” (TLV). Surely, in the close identification of the Father and the Son in the saving action of the gospel or the good news, some ancillary indications about the Son’s integration into the Divine Identity, are indeed detected.

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

“the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all His saints”

“Now may our God and Father Himself and Yeshua our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all His saints.”

Paul’s close association of the Father and the Son not just in his writing to the Thessalonians, but also in what the Son is considered to one day perform, is strong proof of the Apostle holding to a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity.⁷

In 1 Thessalonians 3:11, Paul reemphasizes his desire to see the Thessalonians in person again (1 Thessalonians 3:6), telling his audience, “Now may our God and Father Himself and Yeshua our Lord direct our way to you” (TLV). Theologically, what is significant about 1 Thessalonians 3:11, is how the prayers issued to God involve both the Father and Son invoked together. One might consider a prayer like that seen in Sirach 23:4, “O Lord, Father and God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes,” where God is called both Lord and Father. In 1 Thessalonians 3:11, however, it is the Father who is called God, and the Son who is called Lord. The verb *kateuthunai* (κατεϋθύναι) is an aorist active third person singular, a sure indication that God the Father and Yeshua the Son are acting together. Interpreters have obviously had to note this singular verb, given the fact that it plays some sort of role in understanding the nature of Yeshua. While normally in Second Temple Judaism, God alone would be called Lord and Father, here we definitely see something more involved.

That the Father and Son are invoked together, and that the prayer pattern is based on customary Jewish practice, are clear enough. The opinion of Charles A. Wanamaker on what is seen in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 is, “This, along with 2 Thes. 2:16-17, is the earliest documented evidence of the profound change in prayer language that took place in Christianity as the early Christian community moved away from traditional Jewish prayers, where God alone was addressed or invoked, to the address and invocation of both God and Jesus Christ. Now both God and Jesus Christ are addressed or invoked.”⁸ He further states how “The singular verb...reveals that Paul understood them [Father and Son] as having a close relation.”⁹

⁷ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *1&2 Thessalonians for the Practical Messianic*.

⁸ Charles A. Wanamaker, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: 1&2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 141.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.