

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 25, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 25, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture explores the New Testament books of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, and Titus. He discusses the purpose and context of each of these writings and looks at how the Thessalonian letters balance each other regarding the timing of Christ's return. **Mathewson then shifts focus to the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus), addressing debates around their authorship and the possibility of pseudonymity.** He challenges common interpretations of 1 Timothy, particularly the "church manual" approach, suggesting it primarily aims to combat false teachings in the Ephesian church. **The lecture offers an alternative understanding of controversial passages, like those concerning women's roles, by considering the historical and cultural context of the "new Roman woman."** Finally, Mathewson questions whether Paul's instructions are universally binding or culturally limited.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 25 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession25.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 25, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Dave Mathewson's lecture on Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus.

Briefing Document: Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus

Overview: This lecture covers 1st and 2nd Thessalonians and provides an introduction to 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus (the Pastoral Epistles). The lecture emphasizes careful interpretation of scripture, considering historical context, and avoiding extreme interpretations. It addresses authorship questions of the Pastoral Epistles and their purpose.

I. Thessalonians (1st and 2nd): Balancing Eschatological Perspectives

- **Main Idea:** The two letters to the Thessalonians offer complementary perspectives on the timing of Christ's return. 1 Thessalonians emphasizes the *imminent* possibility of Christ's return, while 2 Thessalonians cautions against prematurely assuming the Day of the Lord has already arrived.
- **2 Thessalonians Context:** Dr. Mathewson suggests 2 Thessalonians was written as a corrective to a misunderstanding of 1 Thessalonians. Some Thessalonians believed they were already in the Day of the Lord. Paul argues this is not the case, because certain events must precede it.
- **Three Preceding Events:** Rebellion
 - The Man of Lawlessness
 - The Removal of the Restrainer
- **The Restrainer:** The identity of the "restrainer" is a matter of historical debate. Various interpretations include the Roman Empire, God himself, the Holy Spirit, the Church, or the Gospel. Paul does not elaborate in 2 Thessalonians, presuming the Thessalonians already knew what he was referring to from his previous teaching: "do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?"

- **Balance:** Dr. Mathewson argues that the placement of these two letters together in the canon serves to create a balanced perspective. 1 Thessalonians: "Christ could come back in our lifetime." 2 Thessalonians: "Christ might delay for some time. We cannot presume that he necessarily will." Christians should live prepared for either scenario.
- **Avoiding Extremes:** Overemphasizing the possibility of delay could lead to complacency. Overemphasizing imminence could lead to rash decisions. Dr. Mathewson recounts a story from the Gulf War era where "prophecy gurus" advised Christians to liquidate their assets based on the belief that the end was near. "So nearly 20 years or more later, I really, pity the people who took that advice seriously. But it misses the perspective that we simply can't know."

II. Introduction to 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus (The Pastoral Epistles)

- **Terminology:** These three letters are collectively known as the "Pastoral Epistles," though Mathewson suggests there might be better names for them.
- **Content Focus:** First Timothy especially deals with church issues, including the selection of elders and deacons and church structure.
- **1 Timothy and Ephesus:** Dr. Mathewson argues that 1 Timothy has the strongest claim to being "the letter to the Ephesians," as it directly addresses a church in Ephesus and Timothy is meant to relay its contents to the church in Ephesus.
- **Order of Writing:** The order of the letters in the New Testament does not necessarily reflect the order in which they were written. Second Timothy was "the last book that Paul wrote, at least that we know of" because Paul clearly faces imminent execution within the letter. The order of Titus and 1 Timothy is debated.
- **Authorship Debate:** The authorship of 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus is often questioned due to potential issues: language/style differences, theological differences, and perceived later church organization within the texts.
- **Pseudonymity:** The lecture notes the prevalence of pseudonymity (writing in someone else's name) in the 1st century and posits the question of whether the texts may have been an example of it. Pseudonymity was "writing in someone else's name, especially the name of someone who had died and who was kind of a hero or a well-known character, was a fairly common literary device." The motivation might have been to add authority or to write "in the spirit of" the deceased author.

- **Arguments Against Pauline Authorship: Language and Style:** Some argue the language and style differ significantly from Paul's undisputed letters.
- **Theological Differences:** Some key Pauline themes, like justification by faith, are absent or developed differently.
- **Later Church Organization:** The structured church described in the Pastoral Epistles seems more developed than what would have existed in the early church, with the implication that they must have come later. "Some see in the pastoral epistles a fairly highly organized and structured church...it would have elders and deacons and a carefully structured leadership. And some say that's what's happening in the pastoral epistles. Therefore, the pastoral epistles must have come later."
- **Ethics:** Some think that the ethics of the Pastoral Epistles emphasize godliness and show the church how to live "in harmony with and how to live within the secular world."
- **Arguments For Pauline Authorship: Early Church Testimony:** The early church fathers largely attributed these letters to Paul.
- **Limited Corpus:** There isn't enough of Paul's writing available to make definitive stylistic conclusions. "Although we have more books written by Paul than any other author in the New Testament, there still is not enough of Paul's writings to do a comparison to determine what Paul could and could not have written."
- **Situational Theology:** Paul might have tailored his message and emphasized different themes based on the specific situation he was addressing. "Is it possible that the situation that he's addressing caused him to tailor his letter in the way he did so that he's maybe emphasizing other themes or other themes that he would have normally emphasized he doesn't at this point?"
- **Church Structure in Other Letters:** Leadership structure was not completely unique to these texts. "Philippians begins by addressing the elders and deacons in the church at Philippi." The structure found in the pastoral epistles does not seem to have "much beyond what we find in some of Paul's earlier letters by way of a highly organized and structured church with bishops and deacons and a main elder, a head bishop, and other bishops."
- **Dr. Mathewson's Conclusion:** Despite the arguments against Pauline authorship, Dr. Mathewson leans towards accepting Paul as the author, attributing differences to his circumstances and the specific issues he was addressing.

III. Purpose of 1 Timothy

- **Traditional View:** The "church manual approach" sees 1 Timothy as a set of instructions to Timothy on how to run the church, covering worship, elder/deacon selection, and church management.
- **Dr. Mathewson's Alternative:** Dr. Mathewson suggests 1 Timothy's primary purpose is to combat false teaching that has infiltrated the church at Ephesus. "Paul says I urge you, Timothy, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach a different or false teaching and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies..."
- **Timothy as Mediator:** Paul is writing *through* Timothy to the Ephesian church. Timothy is in charge and communicates Paul's instructions to the church.
- **Combating False Teaching:** Dr. Mathewson outlines different ways Timothy and the Ephesian church can combat false teaching.
 1. Emphasizing the Gospel of God's grace.
 2. Observing proper church order, especially in worship.
 3. Choosing qualified church leaders (elders and deacons).
 4. Encouraging proper treatment of various groups in the church.
 5. Encouraging proper treatment of the church leaders.
- **Encapsulating Theme:** Dr. Mathewson suggests 1 Timothy 3:15 encapsulates a dominant theme of the book. "I hope to come to you soon...so that if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth."

IV. Example: 1 Timothy 2:9-15 (Women in the Church)

- **Context is Key:** The passage regarding women's attire and roles should be interpreted within the context of the church gathering for worship and in response to a specific problem of false teaching.
- **The "New Roman Woman":** Dr. Mathewson introduces the concept of the "new Roman woman" (from Bruce Winter's work), who flaunted their freedom, dressed provocatively, undermined traditional marriage roles, and displayed wealth ostentatiously.

- **Possible Connection:** Paul's instructions regarding dress, silence, and authority could be a response to the influence of this "new Roman woman" concept within the Ephesian church. Paul may be trying to stop the women from dressing and acting in a manner that is in line with this negative cultural movement that shows disrespect to marriage and husbands. "Paul wants that to stop. So it maybe then understanding a little bit of the background can help you see why Paul writes like this..."
- **Universal vs. Cultural Application:** A key question is whether Paul's instructions are universally binding for all churches in all eras or culturally limited to the specific situation in Ephesus.

V. Key Takeaways

- Understanding the historical and cultural context of biblical texts is crucial for accurate interpretation.
- Avoid extreme interpretations and strive for a balanced perspective, as exemplified by the complementary messages of 1st and 2nd Thessalonians.
- Consider the possibility of situational theology: Paul tailored his message to address specific issues in specific churches.
- The authorship and purpose of biblical texts can be complex and subject to ongoing scholarly debate.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 25, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus

Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus: A Study Guide

Quiz (Short Answer)

1. **What was the main issue Paul addressed in 2 Thessalonians, and how did he attempt to correct it?** The main issue in 2 Thessalonians was the belief among some that the Day of the Lord had already arrived. Paul corrected this by pointing out the events that must precede the Day of the Lord – the rebellion, the man of lawlessness, and the removal of the restrainer.
2. **What is the significance of juxtaposing 1 and 2 Thessalonians within the New Testament canon?** By placing the two books in the same New Testament canon, this provides balance and reminds Christians of their relationship with Christ, both that he might return at any moment, or that his return might be delayed. They should live in preparation for either.
3. **Why are 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus referred to as the Pastoral Epistles?** They are called the Pastoral Epistles primarily because of their content, especially 1 Timothy, which addresses issues related to the church, such as choosing elders and deacons, church structure, and the church's function.
4. **What is pseudonymity, and why is it relevant to discussions about the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles?** Pseudonymity is the practice of writing under a false name, often that of a well-known figure, to add authority to the writing. It's relevant because some scholars believe that the Pastoral Epistles might be pseudonymous, as they differ in style, vocabulary, and theology from other Pauline letters.
5. **What are the main arguments against Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles?** The arguments include differences in language and style compared to undisputed Pauline letters, theological discrepancies (e.g., the absence of justification by faith), and the apparent presence of a later, more structured church organization.
6. **How does the professor address the argument against Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles based on a more structured church organization?** The professor suggests that the early church may have had more structure than critics assume, pointing to the mention of elders and deacons in Philippians as an example.

Moreover, the professor suggests that reading Timothy carefully, the amount that it actually says about church organization is little.

7. **According to the lecture, what is the primary purpose of 1 Timothy, and how does it differ from the "church manual" approach?** According to the lecture, the primary purpose of 1 Timothy is to combat false teaching that has infiltrated the church in Ephesus, not merely to provide an instructional manual on how to run the church.
8. **What specific issue in the church at Ephesus might Paul be addressing when he discusses women's roles in 1 Timothy 2?** Paul might be addressing the influence of the "new Roman woman" concept, where women flaunted their freedom, dressed provocatively, undermined traditional marriage roles, and showed disrespect to their husbands.
9. **In the context of 1 Timothy 2, what is the professor's understanding of the phrase "saved through childbearing?"** According to the lecture material, that section of the book was not explained or summarized.
10. **What is the main debate regarding Paul's instructions about women in 1 Timothy 2:11-15?** The main debate is whether these instructions are universally binding for all churches in all time periods or whether they are culturally limited and specifically addressed to the situation in the 1st-century church of Ephesus.

Quiz Answer Key

1. The main issue in 2 Thessalonians was the belief among some that the Day of the Lord had already arrived. Paul corrected this by pointing out the events that must precede the Day of the Lord – the rebellion, the man of lawlessness, and the removal of the restrainer.
2. By placing the two books in the same New Testament canon, this provides balance and reminds Christians of their relationship with Christ, both that he might return at any moment, or that his return might be delayed. They should live in preparation for either.
3. They are called the Pastoral Epistles primarily because of their content, especially 1 Timothy, which addresses issues related to the church, such as choosing elders and deacons, church structure, and the church's function.
4. Pseudonymity is the practice of writing under a false name, often that of a well-known figure, to add authority to the writing. It's relevant because some scholars

believe that the Pastoral Epistles might be pseudonymous, as they differ in style, vocabulary, and theology from other Pauline letters.

5. The arguments include differences in language and style compared to undisputed Pauline letters, theological discrepancies (e.g., the absence of justification by faith), and the apparent presence of a later, more structured church organization.
6. The professor suggests that the early church may have had more structure than critics assume, pointing to the mention of elders and deacons in Philippians as an example. Moreover, the professor suggests that reading Timothy carefully, the amount that it actually says about church organization is little.
7. According to the lecture, the primary purpose of 1 Timothy is to combat false teaching that has infiltrated the church in Ephesus, not merely to provide an instructional manual on how to run the church.
8. Paul might be addressing the influence of the "new Roman woman" concept, where women flaunted their freedom, dressed provocatively, undermined traditional marriage roles, and showed disrespect to their husbands.
9. According to the lecture material, that section of the book was not explained or summarized.
10. The main debate is whether these instructions are universally binding for all churches in all time periods or whether they are culturally limited and specifically addressed to the situation in the 1st-century church of Ephesus.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the eschatological perspectives presented in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians. How do these perspectives complement each other, and what potential dangers arise from overemphasizing one over the other?
2. Discuss the arguments for and against Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles. Which arguments are most compelling to you, and why?
3. Analyze the professor's argument that the primary purpose of 1 Timothy is to combat false teaching. How does this interpretation affect our understanding of specific passages within the letter, particularly those related to church leadership and the role of women?
4. Explore the potential historical and cultural context behind Paul's instructions regarding women in 1 Timothy 2:8-15. How might the concept of the "new Roman woman" influence Paul's directives?
5. Examine the concept of pseudonymity in the first century and discuss the implications for biblical interpretation if some New Testament books were indeed pseudonymous. What criteria should be used to evaluate the potential for pseudonymity in a given text?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Day of the Lord:** A phrase from the Old Testament referring to a time when God returns to judge evil and reward and save his people.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times or the doctrine of last things.
- **Pastoral Epistles:** The New Testament letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, traditionally attributed to Paul and concerned with pastoral issues.
- **Pseudonymity:** The practice of writing under a false name, often that of a well-known figure.
- **Restrainer:** A figure or force mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 that is holding back the revelation of the "man of lawlessness" (often called the antichrist).
- **Justification by Faith:** A key theological concept in Paul's letters, particularly Romans and Galatians, which states that people are declared righteous before God not by their works but through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Canon:** The list of books recognized by a religious community as authoritative scripture.
- **Heresy:** Belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine.
- **Elder:** A leader in the early church, often associated with overseeing a local congregation.
- **Deacon:** A servant or assistant in the early church, often involved in practical ministry.
- **New Roman Woman:** A cultural concept in the first-century Roman world describing women who flaunted their freedom, dressed provocatively, undermined traditional marriage roles, and showed disrespect to their husbands.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 25, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus

- **What was the primary purpose of 2 Thessalonians?**
- 2 Thessalonians was written primarily to correct the misconception among the Thessalonians that they were already living in the Day of the Lord. Paul clarifies that certain events—a rebellion, the appearance of the "man of lawlessness," and the removal of a "restrainer"—must occur before the Day of the Lord can arrive. His intent was to dissuade them from ceasing to work and relying on others, which they seemed to be doing because they thought the end was near.
- **What are the key differences between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and how do they complement each other?**
- 1 Thessalonians emphasizes the imminence of Christ's return, encouraging believers to live in constant readiness. 2 Thessalonians, on the other hand, tempers this expectation by highlighting the potential for delay. It discourages premature conclusions about the Day of the Lord and urges believers to continue living responsibly. Together, the letters balance each other, reminding Christians to be prepared for both the immediate return of Christ and the possibility of a prolonged wait, living faithfully in either scenario.
- **What are the Pastoral Epistles, and why are they called that?**
- The Pastoral Epistles refer to 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. They are called "Pastoral" primarily because they contain instructions and advice from Paul to Timothy and Titus, who are often regarded as leaders or pastors overseeing churches. These letters address issues related to church leadership, structure, and the handling of various groups within the church.

- **Why is the authorship of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus sometimes questioned?**
- The authorship of these letters is questioned for several reasons: The writing style and vocabulary seem different from Paul's undisputed letters, there appear to be theological differences, such as a lack of emphasis on justification by faith, and the church organization depicted seems more structured than what is typically associated with the early church during Paul's time, and the commonality of Pseudonymity as a writing style at the time. Some scholars suggest these factors indicate a later author writing in Paul's name.
- **What counterarguments support Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles?**
- Despite the challenges to Pauline authorship, several counterarguments are often presented: The testimony of the early church fathers supports that Paul wrote the letters, the limited amount of Paul's writings makes stylistic comparisons difficult and uncertain, there is a plausible explanation for theological differences as Paul tailoring his teachings to the specific situations and the degree of church organization is not as elaborate as some critics suggest, and is consistent with structures from that time.
- **What is the primary purpose of 1 Timothy, and how does it challenge the "church manual" interpretation?**
- The primary purpose of 1 Timothy is to combat false teaching infiltrating the church in Ephesus. This perspective challenges the traditional "church manual" interpretation, which views the letter merely as an instructional guide for church governance and administration. Instead, it suggests that Paul is primarily concerned with addressing and correcting doctrinal errors that threaten the true gospel.
- **What specific problem might Paul be addressing regarding women in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and how does the concept of the "new Roman woman" relate to this?**
- Paul may be addressing issues related to the influence of the "new Roman woman" concept within the Ephesian church. This concept involved women flaunting their freedom, dressing provocatively, undermining traditional marriage roles, and displaying disrespect toward their husbands. Paul's instructions regarding modest dress and women not teaching or having authority over men in the church may be a response to these behaviors, which were causing disruption and disorder in the worship service.

- **How should we interpret Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 today—as universally binding or as culturally specific to the situation in Ephesus?**
- The interpretation of these instructions is a subject of debate. The central question is whether Paul intended these instructions to be universally binding for all churches in all time periods or whether they were specifically tailored to address a particular cultural and contextual problem in the 1st-century church of Ephesus. Understanding the specific historical and cultural context is crucial for determining the most appropriate application of these instructions today.