



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N24

June 11, 2023

LIVING HOPE

“And Justice for All”

2 Thessalonians 1:3-10

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Eternity

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”

John 14:1-4



When will the righteous be vindicated and the wicked punished?

On the writing of 2 Thessalonians commentators generally agree that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians from Corinth, the same place from which he earlier wrote his first letter. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Corinth (Acts 18:5; cf. 2Th 1:1) and are not reported to be together from then on. The matters addressed in his second letter appear to grow out of situations he alluded to in the first and reflect a very similar situation in the church. The two letters were evidently written within months of one another – the first in the early summer of A.D. 51 and the second later that same summer (H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*, 130). The first was written in response to a report brought to Paul by Timothy (1Th 3:6); the second was likely written in response to a report brought to Paul by the returning person who delivered the first letter.

Paul’s Thessalonian correspondence deals extensively with *eschatology*, the doctrine of last things. Every chapter in 1 Thessalonians ends with a reference to the coming of Jesus to rescue (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:9), and like 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians likewise deals extensively with the same subject. “In fact, in 2 Thessalonians 18 out of 47 verses deal with this subject” (*The NIV Study Bible*, 2028), which explains why the two epistles are often called “the eschatological letters of Paul.”

While both letters refer to the coming of Jesus, they distinguish two phases in his return. The first letter refers to the coming of Jesus to *rescue*, while the second refers to his coming to *reign*. The first letter reveals that the Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus,” who will rescue them from the coming wrath” (1:9b-10), that Jesus will rescue them by *snatching up* the living and the resurrected dead together to meet him in the air at his coming so they might be with him forever (4:16-18), and that Jesus will

come to rescue them before the day of the Lord, because God did not appoint them to suffer wrath but to receive deliverance from the destruction he will bring upon the unbelieving world (5:1-11).

The second letter reveals that their just God will vindicate them and recompense their persecutors “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels” (1:6-7). The Lord is not revealed to the world, that is, does not come into public view, when he comes to *rescue* believers from coming wrath; he is revealed to the world when he comes to *reign* over Israel and the nations (Lk 17:30; cf. Mt 24:30). This is implied by the fact that his coming to *reign* is described in very different terms in Matthew’s Gospel than his coming to *rescue* is in Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians:

29 “Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

30 “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (24:29-31)

The coming of Jesus to *reign*, that is, to govern Israel and the nations or in the words of the Eternity Creed, “to establish his eternal kingdom” (cf. Da 2:44; 7:14; Isa 9:6-7; Lk 1:32-33), holds out hope and offers *rest* to the righteous who are counted worthy by faith to enter it, while to the wicked, who will be excluded from the kingdom, it proffers neither (cf. Mt 25:1-13; 31-46).

1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Read in another translation

3 We ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith flourishes more and more and the love of each one of you all for one another is ever greater. 4 As a result we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and afflictions you are enduring.

5 This is evidence of God's righteous judgment, to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which in fact you are suffering. 6 For it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to you who are being afflicted to give rest together with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. 8 With flaming fire he will mete out punishment on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will undergo the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his strength, 10 when he comes to be glorified among his saints and admired on that day among all who have believed – and you did in fact believe our testimony.
(NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "ought" in v. 3.
- Bracket "perseverance and faith" in v. 4.
- Bracket "persecutions and trials" in v. 4.
- Circle "All this" in v. 5.
- Bracket "God's judgment is right" in v. 5.
- Highlight "kingdom of God" in v. 5.
- Circle "relief" in v. 7.
- Box "This" in v. 7.
- Circle "revealed" in v. 7.
- Circle "punish" in v. 8.
- Circle "everlasting destruction" in v. 9.
- Underline "presence" and "glory" in v. 9.
- Double underline "glorified" and "marveled at" in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain why Paul feels *obligated* (cf. “ought,” v. 3) to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians (see 1Th 3:10, 12).
 2. Put *exactly* what Paul boasted about among God’s churches in your own words.
 3. God’s *judgment* regarding the Thessalonians is right (v. 5). What judgment?
 4. “God is *just*.” How so?
 5. “Relief” is promised to the “troubled” Thessalonians (v. 7). *What* will happen, and *when* will it happen?
 6. “Relief” is also promised to Paul and his colleagues, Silas and Timothy (v. 7; cf. v. 1). What do you *infer* from that?
 7. Describe the *mood* surrounding Jesus coming to *reign* based on how his coming is portrayed in verses 7, 9, 10 (cf. Mt 24:29-31).
 8. What will happen to the *troublers*—i.e., “those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel” (v. 8-9)—when the worm turns and the “troubled” receive relief?
 9. Jesus will “be glorified” and “marveled at” by those who have believed “on the day he comes.” How so?
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about your response to the *vindication* and *recompense* to be received when Jesus returns to *reign*.
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Commentary On The Text

Letters can be defined as ongoing conversations between people who are apart. Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians certainly fit that definition nicely. The ongoing nature of the conversation between the two parties can be seen in a variety of ways. For example, following the opening salutation (1:1-2), the apostle's prayer of thanksgiving (vv. 3-4) echoes themes prominent in 1 Thessalonians. The readers' faith, love, and hope for which he expressed thanks to God in his first letter (1:2-3) are cited again as reasons to give thanks in his second (vv. 3-4). And while not *explicitly* mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, hope, which is a trait of "perseverance" based on the evident link between the two—"endurance inspired by hope" (1Th 1:3)—is (v. 4). Furthermore, in his 2 Thessalonians prayer, the apostle gives thanks to God for answering a previous prayer. One commentator explains: "The phrase 'we ought' is otherwise unparalleled in Paul's writings . . . The Thessalonians' 'faith is growing more and more,' and the love they have 'for each other is increasing'—the very things for which Paul said he was praying in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12. Any sense of 'obligation' in 2 Thessalonians 1:3a is driven not by duty but by gratitude to God for the divinely inspired growth experienced by the Thessalonians, a gratitude so overwhelming that one has little choice but to give thanks for it" (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 211). And finally, 2 Thessalonians contains further teaching on eschatology, some of which was occasioned by incorrect teaching regarding the day of the Lord purportedly received from him (cf. 2:1-12). The fact that the Thessalonians' faith and love were growing in spite of the persecutions and trials they were enduring was reason enough to give thanks and to boast about them among God's churches (vv. 3-4).

Paul goes on to write in verse 5: "All this,"—i.e., all the reasons he just cited for giving thanks for his readers—"is evidence that God's judgment is right." And what "judgment" is that? It's his judgment that the Thessalonians "will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (v. 5). Put differently, God is right to count them "worthy of the kingdom of God" because their faith is clearly genuine, as evidenced by their increasing faith and love, and their perseverance "in all the persecutions and trials" they are enduring—faith is the ticket that gains them entrance into Christ's kingdom.

In verses 6-7a, Paul extrapolates from God's justice as follows: Because "God is just," he will necessarily turn the tables on the readers' persecutors. "He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you," Paul writes. "And give relief to you who are troubled." The inclusion of Paul and his colleagues as an afterthought—

"And to us as well"—implies that the same holds true for all who believe.

"This," that is, the manifestation of God's justice described in verses 6-7a, will happen when the Lord Jesus "is revealed," that is, when he comes to *reign* over Israel and the nations (v. 7b; cf. Mt 24:29-31; Rev 19:11-20:6). Now hidden from sight by heaven's curtain, when he comes to reign, the curtain will be drawn, and he will be seen by everyone, and everyone will recognize he truly is, the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:6), who has come "in blazing fire with his powerful angels" (v. 7b) to execute judgment. Consequently, "all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30b).

Two groups of people will receive their specified due on that day (vv. 8-10). On the one hand, Jesus will "punish" or "take vengeance on" the first group, "those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel" (v. 8)—including the Thessalonians' *troublers*. They will be "punished with everlasting destruction," which implies according to one commentator, that their destruction "will be neither temporary nor will it be annihilation, but it will continue throughout eternity and those being punished will be conscious. It is eternal death as opposed to eternal life (Matt. 25:46). The nature of the **destruction** follows in the next phrase. Separation from the Lord's **presence** (lit., 'face') is the essence of eternal punishment" (Thomas L. Constable, "2 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 716). Separation from the Lord's presence initially means exclusion from his kingdom (cf. Mt 25:46) and ultimately means exclusion from his presence throughout eternity.

On the other hand, while the first group is "shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (v. 9), the second group, "those counted worthy of the kingdom," all those who obey the gospel including the Thessalonians, will gain entrance into the kingdom. Those who have believed will glorify and admire their king. Another commentator explains: "Those who have believed will marvel at him and the holy ones (the same group) will glorify him, in stark contrast to the rejection he and his people suffered (v. 8). In his revelation, his people will give him the glory and honor he deserves because of the execution of his judgment on that day (cf. Exod. 14:4, 17, 18; Ezek. 28:22; 38:23)" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 295).

As Christians we look forward to both the return of Jesus to *rescue* (1Th 4:13-18), as well as the return of Jesus to *reign* (2Th 1:5-10). We are rescued from coming wrath in the day of the Lord as a result of the first, and we gain entrance into the messianic kingdom as a result of the second.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 4 **perseverance** Cf. “patient endurance” (EHV; LEB); “endurance” (HCSB; NLT); “steadfastness” (ESV; RSV). “The mention of faith, love and endurance is in the same general order as in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, where the third element is expanded to ‘endurance inspired by hope.’ Therefore, ‘hope’ is likely implied in ‘endurance’ here, so that Paul’s triad of faith, love and hope also commences this epistle (see further on 1 Thess 1:3)” (G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 182; Cf. Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT, 246).

v. 4 **faith** “Accompanying the perseverance of the Thessalonians was their ‘faith’ or, perhaps better, their ‘faithfulness.’ While ‘faith’ is the common meaning of *pistis* in Paul’s writings (Morris, NIC, p. 196), the present context justifies the less frequent sense of ‘faithfulness’ or ‘fidelity,’ which Paul also makes use of (Rom 3:3; Gal 5:22; Titus 2:10) (Lünemann, p. 188). Their tenacious loyalty to Christ in spite of fierce adversity is what Paul finds so remarkable” (Thomas, 308).

v. 4 **persecutions, trials** The first may connote “acts of hostility towards the believers because they are believers [EBC, Hb, Mn, NIC, SSA], and of injury done to them, or to their property, by those who oppose the gospel [EA]. The second is a more generic term [Ea, EBC, EGT, El, Fn, Hb, Hn, Lns, Mn, My, NIV, Rb, SSA, Wd], which includes sickness, hunger, poverty [Ea, SSA], and also loss of friends, and the breaking up of families [Ea]. But here some commentators say that it specifically means the difficult experiences they went through because of their faith [Fn, Hb, NIC]” (Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 2nd ed., 182; see also Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 283). That said, their trials were most likely related to their persecutions.

v. 5 **kingdom of God** “Paul taught elsewhere that God will reward Christians who endure the temptation to abandon their commitment to Jesus Christ with the privilege of reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom (2 Tim. 2:12). Whereas all Christians will enter the millennial kingdom at His Second Coming, only those who follow Him faithfully in this life will reign with Him. What this will involve remains to be seen” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 2 Thessalonians,” 2023 ed., 9, plano-biblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2thessalonians.pdf). “With opposition behind them, all who are Christ’s at his Parousia will be welcomed into the messianic kingdom on the ground of their God-given worthiness . . . troublers will be denied entrance into the messianic kingdom that has welcomed the faithful followers of Christ (v.5; Matt 25:41, 46)” (Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11:310).

v. 7 **relief** Or “rest” (NET); cf. “kingdom of God” (v. 4). “It means relief from persecution [Ea, Lns, WBC], and suffering [EBC, Er, Hb, ICC], absence of troubles and suffering [Hb, HNTC, My, NCBC, SSA, TH], and also *the positive blessing of being in and enjoying God’s kingdom* [EBC, El, Hn, HNTC, Lns, WBC]” (Blight, 189, italics added). “God will grant them eschatological ‘relief’ [*anesin*], a word that means ‘relief from a burden’; the burden is living as a Christian and having to face the world’s persecution. In other Jewish and Christian literature, ‘rest’ is a metaphor for the future kingdom” (Shogren, 249).

v. 7 **revealed** “The word revealed (*apokalypsis*) literally connotes an uncovering and, when applied to Christ’s final appearance, refers . . . to Christ’s formerly hidden presence being unveiled from the invisible heavenly dimension (1 Cor 1:7; 1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13; see the discussion at 1 Thess 4:16-17)” (Beale, 186-87). “Christ is now in heaven hidden from sight, but then he will come from heaven, appear, and be visible [Ea, El, Hb, Hn, HNTC, ICC, Lns, My, NCBC, NIC, SSA, Wd]” (Blight, 189).

v. 8 **punish** Cf. “inflicting vengeance” (ESV); “taking vengeance” (NKJV, HCSB); “dealing out retribution” (NASB). Are two distinct groups punished, “those who do not know God,” i.e., pagan Gentiles, and those “who do not obey the gospel,” i.e., unbelieving Jews (see Thomas, 312-13) or just one group “those who do not know God, *even on those who do not obey the gospel*” (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of I and II Thessalonians: Commentary on I Thessalonians*, NTC, 160; F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 151-52).

v. 9 **everlasting destruction** “The punishment of the wicked will be neither temporary nor will it be annihilation, but it will continue throughout eternity and those being punished will be conscious. It is eternal death as opposed to eternal life (Matt. 25:46). The nature of the **destruction** follows in the next phrase. Separation from the Lord’s **presence** (lit., ‘face’) is the essence of eternal punishment” (Thomas L. Constable, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 716).

v. 9 **presence, glory** To be “shut out” of his presence and glory is to be excluded from Christ’s kingdom and separated from his presence forever after (cf. Mt 25:41, 46).

v. 10 **glorified, marveled at** I.e., the Lord will be “glorified” by and “marveled at” by all those counted worthy to enter the messianic kingdom (v. 5) when Christ rules over the nations (Rev 19:15; 20:6).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

When Jesus comes to *reign*, those who believe the gospel will enter the kingdom while those who do not, will be shut out, condemned to everlasting destruction.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

My youngest son has always been a character. He has forever made us laugh with his quippy sayings and non-sense shenanigans. When he was in second grade, he had to color a sign that said, "I can do hard things." He creatively adjusted the sign to say, "I *can't* do hard things." I'm with you, buddy. Hard things are hard and I can't do them either, or rather, I just don't want to. Add to daily hard things the fact that we live in a fallen world where injustice is great, and a potentially combustible situation develops. Mean people succeed, criminals win, hurt people hurt others, the rich get richer and the poor are stuck in a spiraling vortex from which it's impossible to break free. There is no justice and hard things make it seem as if our trials are impossible to overcome. So, what's a follower of Christ to do? Keep on! Don't ever give up running the race with your eyes on the prize. We might not experience relief from the trials of life and we might not see justice this side of heaven, but victory is promised and His name is Jesus. I'm reminded to preach the gospel to myself - our troubles are temporary and their purpose is to grow and change us with eternity in mind. We should fix our eyes on our eternal Father, focusing on His faithfulness, trusting His ways are higher than our own, knowing without fail that He is just and resting in the victory promised to every believer. This is how we grow in Christ. I'm praying you seek God with your whole heart.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10.

1. Why does Paul thank God for the Thessalonians?
2. How is God's justice described?
3. When will God administer justice?

What Do You Think?

How does God's punishment of unbelievers show his justice?

What Do You Do?

Gather some photos of yourself throughout the years. How have you grown? How much do you think you'll grow and change as you get older? How do you expect to grow spiritually?

CORE COMPETENCY: Eternity

I believe in heaven and hell and that one day Jesus will come again.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 8:28

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) from 1986 to 1998 and Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church (Arlington, TX) from 1998 to 2022. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org