

2Thessalonians

I. Intro

- A. 2Thessalonians is the 14th book of the New Testament and 9th among the epistles
 - a. Epistles are the major doctrinal sections of the NT
 - b. They were written to churches or individuals to explain theology, answers questions and address problems of doctrine or practice in the early church.
 - c. In them we find the theology of the New Covenant explained
- B. 2Thessalonians is the 2nd letter written to a young church situated in Thessalonica
 - a. The city was large and influential. It was the capital of Macedon and sat on the northern fringe of the **Thermaic Gulf** making it an international port city.
 - b. This would serve as a strategic point for the spreading of the Gospel.
 - i. Paul declares that:
“For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place...” (1Thes 1:8)
- C. The church was started on Paul’s second Missionary journey recorded in Acts 17
 - a. After only 3 weeks of ministry, hostility broke out against Paul and his companions and they were forced to flee from the city.
 - b. During those few weeks
 - i. Paul taught regarding the death, resurrection and return of Christ

Acts 17:2-3
Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.”

2Thes 2:5

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

ii. Many came to faith in Christ

Acts 17:4

And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

c. After their departure, Timothy returned to Thessalonica to disciple the young believers.

i. His effectiveness is seen in the complimentary statements Paul makes regarding the church

1. 1Thes 3:6
2. 1Thes 1:2-3
3. 1Thes 1:7-8
4. 1Thes 4:9-10
5. 2Thes 1:3-4

ii. Timothy returned to Paul with a report and with many questions from the young church

1. 1Thessalonians answers many of these questions. Particularly regarding what happens to those who die in Christ, and what happens to those who remain alive until His return
2. About 1 year later a second report reached Paul, filled with more questions. These also have to do with eschatology.
3. 2Thessalonians is Paul's answer. Making 1&2Thessalonians the major eschatological epistles in the NT along with Revelation.

D. Traditionally 1-2Thessalonians are considered to be among the earliest of the NT writings.

- a. 1Thessalonians – 51 AD
- b. 2Thessalonians – 52AD

- i. It is remarkable that to such a young group of believers Paul would grapple with such weighty subjects as the rapture and return of Christ.
- ii. We are never too young in Christ to begin to get a handle on theology and Biblical doctrine.

E. Seems to be 3 primary reasons for this second letter

- a. They were persecuted and needed encouragement
- b. They were misled and needed instruction
- c. They were idle and needed correction

II. OUTLINE

A. Intro

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the **Thessalonians** in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. Letter was written by Paul along with his traveling companions Silas (also called Silvanus) and Timothy
- b. After Paul departed for Athens, Timothy remained behind to disciple the new converts.
 - i. This was his first solo opportunity for ministry.
 - ii. We see clearly the value in investing in the next generation as well as the need to trust them with opportunities.
- c. The letter was written to the church that formed in Thessalonica
 - i. Though a young church they had already grown to be an example to believers everywhere
 - ii. One of the purposes of 1-2Thessalonians is to illustrate what a healthy church looks like. Notice that Paul highlights
 1. 1Thes 1:2-3 – working faith
 2. 1Thes 1:6 – receptive to the Word
 3. 1Thes 1:7 – Setting an example for others
 4. 1Thes 1:8 – sharing the Gospel with others
 5. 1Thes 1:9 – turning from past life
 6. 1Thes 1:10 – Expectant of the Lords return

7. 1Thes 4:13 – sought counsel
8. 2Thes 1:3 – growing faith

B. After the intro, 2Thessalonians divides naturally into 3 parts based upon the reasons for writing

- a. Chapter 1 - They were persecuted and needed encouragement
- b. Chapter 2 - They were misled and needed instruction
- c. Chapter 3 - They were idle and needed correction

C. Chapter 1

- a. The Thessalonian church was birthed in persecution. Paul, their founding Pastor was driven out of the city
- b. This persecution continued after his departure.
 - i. Things had become so difficult that it caused many to believe that they had missed the rapture (a subject Paul addressed in great detail in 1Thessalonians)
 - ii. They believed that they were in the Tribulation
 - iii. One man put it this way, “it would be impossible to turn the world upside down without provoking some reaction from the world”
- c. Paul’s answer is to explain that there is a day coming when God will judge those who have rejected Him

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, ^{1a} because our testimony among you was believed.

Paul explains that Christ will return with His angels to take vengeance on those who have refused the Gospel message AND to give rest to those who have

suffered under the persecution of a Christ rejecting world

Remember, it is not that time yet. Now it is the season of grace. No matter who you are or what you have done, you can have sins forgiven and be made right with God through faith in Christ

d. It is clear that Paul is speaking of the return of Christ rather than the rapture

D. Chapter 2

- a. The Thessalonians were confused about the coming of Christ
 - i. False teachers and difficult circumstances had influenced their understanding of eschatology
 - ii. Before the first letter they thought those who died before Christ returned would miss out on eternity
 - iii. Now they believed they were living in the Tribulation period

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him

- b. Notice a distinction is made between being gathered to Christ and His coming.
 - i. One is referred to as “The Rapture”
 - ii. The other as “The Second Coming”
 - iii. David Guzik put it this way

“Paul clearly wrote of the return of Jesus, but the wording here implies a difference between **the coming** and **our gathering**. This strongly suggests that there are essentially two comings of Jesus. One coming is *for* His church (as described clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), and the other coming is *with* His church, to judge a rebellious world.”

1. Paul writes to 1Thessalonians to explain the rapture
2. He writes 2Thessalonians to explain the 2nd Coming

- c. Before we look at Paul's eschatology it is important to keep the purpose of prophecy in mind
 - i. Warren Wiersbe put it this way;

"The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to build a calendar but to build character"

It is not a single day, but a period associated with God's outpouring of judgment and the deliverance of God's people. A significant aspect of the *day of the Lord* is the Great Tribulation described in Matthew 24:1-31

But Paul will demonstrate that they are not in the **day of Christ**; because if they were, then certain signs would be present.

THE FALLING AWAY

"You are worried that we are in the Great Tribulation and that you missed the rapture. But you can know that we are *not* in the Great Tribulation, because we have not yet seen **the falling away** that **comes first**."

The idea of a great end-times apostasy also does not contradict the idea of a great end-times revival. Some Christians doubt the idea of great revival in the last days, or even welcome apostasy believing it signals the end. But just as the Book of Revelation describes great rejection of Jesus during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 9:20-21 and 17:2-6) *and* great acceptance of Him (Revelation 7:9-14), the two can stand side-by-side.

THE MAN OF SIN

And the man of sin is revealed: Before the Great Tribulation can be identified with certainty, a particular person - known as **the man of sin**, - must be **revealed**.

Daniel described an individual person: *The prince who is to come* (Daniel 9:26), the *king of fierce countenance* (Daniel 8:23), the *willful king* (Daniel 11:36-45).

- Jesus described an individual person: The one who comes *in his own name* (John 5:43).

This **man of sin** is a prominent figure in the Bible, and the ultimate personification of the *spirit of the Antichrist* spoken of in 1 John 4:2-3.

Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or is worshipped: The *man of sin* demands worship for himself that belongs to God only (Luke 4:8). This demand for worship is also described in Revelation 13:1-6.

So that he sits as God in the temple of God: The man of sin's demand for worship will be so extreme, he will set himself up as God in the temple at Jerusalem, demanding this blasphemous worship from everyone (Revelation 13:14-15 and Matthew 24:15, 21, 29-31).

i. The prophet Daniel told us the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and bring sacrifice and offerings to an end; that the Antichrist will defile the temple by setting something abominable there (Daniel 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11).

ii. Jesus said to look for an abomination standing in the holy place, which would be the pivotal sign that the season of God's wrath was upon the earth (Matthew 24:15-16 and 24:21).

The atheist does the opposite of the regular idolater. He searches the scripture for the harsher judgments of God and builds an image of God he finds to be repulsive. Then once he has created an idol he flatly rejects it. And so he should. The image that he has created of God is in fact evil. IT is without love and mercy. And so the atheist has the same problem as the idolater. The image only exists in the imagination of the atheist. IT is not the God of Scripture