

New Testament Survey—2 Thessalonians

If we're going to live well for Christ in the present, we need to have an eye on the future. Let's begin our study this evening with some discussion of a couple of important questions...

1. What's going to happen in the future? State some things you know are coming, and identify the passage of Scripture that gives you this assurance.

2. What effect does this knowledge of future events have on you (or should it have)?

To do: Mark all the verses that return to the return of Christ in the letter of 2 Thessalonians...

- **Who wrote the book?**

--Paul

Note: Paul's authorship of this letter has been questioned by some for the following reasons:

1. Differences in vocabulary (ten words not used elsewhere)
2. Differences in style (it is said to be unexpectedly formal)
3. Different twist in eschatology (the doctrine of "the man of lawlessness" is not taught elsewhere by Paul)

Nonetheless, the majority still hold to Paul's authorship.

- **When was the book written?**

--A.D. 51 or 52, in Corinth

Paul apparently wrote this epistle after Silas and Timothy had returned from delivering his first letter. There were about six months (NIVsb) between the two letters, or less (Gromacki says a month or two; p. 286).

- **Why was the book written?**

1. *To give further encouragement to believers facing severe persecution*

Notice how the book begins in ch. 1.

Q: Acc. to 1:3, what two factors gave occasion for Paul's thanksgiving? The church's faith and love

Q: Acc. to 1:4, what gave Paul all the more reason to boast about this church? They persevered in the midst of severe persecution.

2. *To straighten out confusion in the church about the return of Christ*

Key: Like 1 Thessalonians, the second letter has much to say to us about eschatology. 18 out of 47 verses (38%) deal with eschatology.

Paul wanted to assure the Thessalonians that the return of Christ could be a real source of hope for them. What two things did he say would happen when Christ returned, according to the following verses?

a) Acc. to 1:7--Christ will give you relief when He comes

b) Acc. to 1:8--Christ will punish those who do not know God

Q: What kind of punishment will unbelievers receive at his return? 1:9

Q: What will believers be doing when he returns? 1:10

3. *To exhort Christians to work for a living while they wait for the Lord*

Apparently, there was confusion in the church due to a forged letter, which claimed to have been from Paul, a letter that claimed that believers would go into the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation).

See: 2:1-3

The Christians were in turmoil because Paul's words (which they had heard him speak in person) did not match his supposed letter. His explanation in chapter two was intended to clear up this confusion.

Q: Why did Paul say what he said in 3:17 about "writing this greeting" in his own handwriting? To prevent them from being duped by another forgery.

2 Thessalonians teaches us to work while we wait. Look at 3:6-15.

Q: What command did Paul give in v 6? Keep away from the idle and disobedient

Q: What kind of example did Paul give, acc. to vv 7-8? Worked hard

Q: What rule did Paul lay down during his time in Thes? V 10 No work, no eat

No sponging. Yes, the church is to be benevolent and generous. But in the distribution of the benevolence fund, Christians who are irresponsible are to be confronted. Which is what Paul did in verses 11-13 (read).

Q: What did Paul say should happen to any who would disregard this counsel? V 14

Q: Is that harsh, acc. to v 15? No, it's a family matter. It's in the best interest of the other.

• **What is the outline of the book?**

(adapted from *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1829)

I. Introduction (ch. 1)

II. Instruction (ch. 2)

A. Prophecy regarding the Day of the Lord 2:1-12)

B. Thanksgiving for Their Election and Calling (Their Position) (2:13-15)

C. Prayer for Their Service and Testimony (Their Practice) (2:16-17)

III. Injunctions (ch. 3)

A. Call to Prayer (3:1-3)

B. Charge to Discipline for the Disorderly and Lazy (3:4-15)

C. Conclusion, Greeting and Benediction (3:16-18)

• **What is the message of the book in one sentence?**

2 Thessalonians helps straighten out some confusion about the return of Christ.

• **What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?**

1. *2 Thessalonians teaches us about the Day of the Lord.*

Discuss: What do you see happening in our day that contributes to an atmosphere ripe for the coming of the antichrist?

Look at ch. 2 for insight into this subject.

Q: Acc. to 2:3, what will happen before the Day the Lord returns?

Q: Acc. to 2:4, what kind of person will the antichrist be?

Q: Acc. to 2:8, what will Jesus do to the antichrist when He comes?

Q: What else will this lawless one do, acc. to 2:9?

Q: Why do people perish, acc. to 2:10? Because they refuse to love the truth

Q: What will God do to such people in relation to the lawless one? V 11

Discuss: Why are men more willing to believe a lie than the truth?

2. *2 Thessalonians teaches us how to live while we wait for the Lord's return.*

See: 3:6ff.

3. *2 Thessalonians teaches us how to pray for Christians facing persecution.*

See: 1:11-12

Let's pray this prayer together...