

Midweek Study

Dr. Josh Franklin • Senior Pastor

God's Amazing Book

Journey Through the New Testament

YOU CAN WORK WHILE YOU WAIT

A Quick Look at the Second Letter to the Church of Thessalonica

Fast Facts on 2 Thessalonians

Written by? Apostle Paul

Written to whom? Christians in Thessalonica

Written when? c. A.D. 50-52 [c. 18 months after first letter]

Written where? Corinth (Paul's second missionary journey)

Written why?

1. To correct some misunderstandings in the area of eschatology
 - the nature of the Day of the Lord.
 - the nature of the man of lawlessness
2. To correct disorderliness in the church related to false eschatology

I am greatly encouraged that the apostle Paul had to write a second letter to the Thessalonians to explain his first! I have had to do that on occasion. – Ray Stedman

*"BUT I thought he said . . . , "I'm sure he meant . . . ,"
"It is clear to me that we should . . . , "I disagree. I think we must"*

Effective communication is difficult; often the message sent is *not* the message received in the home, marketplace, neighborhood, or church. Even when clearly stated or written, words can be misinterpreted and misunderstood, especially when filtered through the screen of prejudices and preconceptions. Paul faced this problem with the Thessalonians. He had written them earlier to help them grow in the faith, comforting and encouraging them by affirming the reality of Christ's return. Just a few months later, however, word came from Thessalonica that some had misunderstood Paul's teaching about the second coming. His announcement that Christ could come at any moment had caused some to stop working and just wait, rationalizing their idleness by pointing to Paul's teaching. Adding fuel to this fire was the continued persecution of the church. Many felt that indeed this must be the "day of the Lord." Responding quickly, Paul sent a second letter to this young church. In it he gave further instruction concerning the second coming and the day of the Lord ([2Th 2:1,2](#)). Second Thessalonians, therefore, continues the subject of 1 Thessalonians and is a call to continued courage and consistent conduct.

Second Thessalonians is a sequel to Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica. Sequels, at least with regard to books and movies, rarely have quite the punch of the original. However, one look at Paul's closing remarks in 2 Thessalonians... dispels that conclusion with the swiftness of a left jab and the impact of an uppercut. – Charles Swindoll

Background of the Epistle

- a. Somehow, unknown to us, Paul heard some disturbing news of happenings at the church at Thessalonica and wrote 2 Thessalonians. This letter was penned shortly after 1 Thessalonians, most likely within eighteen months. The condition of the church is much the same in both epistles (compare 1 Thess. 1:3-4 with 2 Thess. 1:3-7; 1 Thess. 2:15-16 with 2 Thess. 3:2 and Acts 18:6). Like 1 Thess., this epistle was written from Corinth on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17).

- b. There is some debate as to which epistle came first, but it can be affirmed from 2 Thess. 2:15, “. . . you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us,” that 1 Thessalonians preceded 2 Thessalonians. The letter referred to in 2 Thessalonians seems to presuppose the existence of 1 Thessalonians.

Date and Place

- a. Again, it is most probable that 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians lists the same associates of Paul as 1 Thessalonians, thus it is hard to assign 2 Thessalonians to a different time period.
- b. Second Thessalonians also was probably penned in Corinth during Paul’s second missionary journey (A.D. 50–52).

Purpose

Paul wrote this second epistle for two basic reasons:

- a. The first was to correct some misunderstandings regarding the Day of the Lord. Some false teachers produced spurious information to the effect Paul had said the Day of the Lord was present (2:1-2). Because the church was undergoing persecution (1 Thess. 2:14-16), this appeared to be a logical deduction. This problem is addressed in 2:1-12.
- b. Paul also wrote to correct disorderliness in the church. Some reasoned that they should leave their jobs because the Lord’s coming was so near. Paul wrote 3:6-16 to correct this unwise and irresponsible behavior.

The Features of this Epistle

Second Thessalonians is much like 1 Thessalonians. However, there are some features that make them different.

- a. In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis is on the coming of the Lord in the air for His saints; in 2 Thessalonians it is on the coming of the Lord with the saints to earth.
- b. In 1 Thessalonians the coming of Christ stands out. In 2 Thessalonians the coming of the Antichrist (man of lawlessness) stands out.
- c. In 1 Thessalonians there is much said about comfort. In 2 Thessalonians there is much to do with correction.

<h3>FASCINATING FACTS:</h3>

1. 2 Thessalonians contains one of the main New Testament teachings concerning the Antichrist (2:3-12).
2. Eleven times in this short epistle, Paul refers to the “Lord Jesus Christ” as he exhorts these young believers to focus on Him.
3. Second Thessalonians 2 contains three different titles for the Antichrist: “man of sin” (v. 2), “son of perdition” (v. 2), and “lawless one” (v. 8).
4. In Second Thessalonians 2, the sinner’s condemnation is everlasting (v. 9), and the saints consolation is everlasting (v. 16).
5. Between 1 and 2 Thessalonians, almost every major doctrine of the Christian faith is mentioned.
6. In the New Testament, there are nearly 320 references dealing with the subject of Christ’s return, or one in every twenty-five verses. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, that rate jumps dramatically to one in every four verses. More space is dedicated to the subject of Christ’s return in the New Testament than to baptism and Communion combined.

EXTRA POINTS OF APPLICATION FROM 2 Thessalonians

1. WORK WHILE YOU WAIT - While you wait for Jesus to return, work as if He will not come back. (Luke 19:13)
2. GOD WILL JUDGE – Wickedness will be punished and Faithfulness will be rewarded! (1:5-10)
3. GOD IS IN CONTROL – God is in charge of world events, wicked men and our own circumstances. (2:1-10)
4. WORK IS GOD’S IDEA – We shouldn’t live off of others if we can help it. We shouldn’t EVER be lazy. We shouldn’t eat if we won’t work. (3:6-15)