

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Introduction

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth that the Apostle Paul is presenting in these two letters he penned to the Thessalonians and we would be missing the mark if we did not recognize it.

The two letters contain twenty different references to the coming of the Lord. This is the hope of the Church and is mentioned in the closing of every chapter. We are encouraged in Chapter 1:10 *“To wait for His Son from heaven”*, and in Chapter 2:19 *“in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming”*, and in Chapter 3:13 *“at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints”*, and in Chapter 4:17 *“caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air”*; and finally in chapter 5:23 *“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be presented blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”*!

In view of all this should anyone raise the question, “Will Christ come again?”

Christ’s first coming was sudden and a surprise to the philosophers and religious leaders of His time and so will be His second coming. To those who have a personal relationship with Christ and seek to know His Word, they will not be surprised but will welcome the sudden departure into heaven.

Background: Luke explained how Paul came to Thessalonica and how the church was founded in the Book of Acts 17:1 – 15. Apparently, Paul went to Macedonia in response to a “call” from a man in Macedonia who said, *“Come over into Macedonia and help us”* (Acts 16:9). Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy arrived first in Philippi where they led Lydia and her household to Christ and there established a church. Paul and Silas were arrested on false charges, beaten, and put into jail. But God delivered them out of prison and they were able to lead the jailer and his household to faith in Christ.

After encouraging the new believers, Paul and his friends left Philippi (though Luke probably stayed behind temporarily) and headed for the important city of Thessalonica.

Paul and his friends, Timothy and Silas or (Silvanus), had spent only three Sundays at Thessalonica during Paul’s second missionary journey, but during that time he not only planted a church, he also grounded it firmly in faith. In this short period of time Paul created a great stir. His enemies accused him of *“turning the world upside down”* (Acts 17:6) and on account of people wanting to kill Paul, the brethren were forced to send him away. He went on to Berea, Athens and Corinth. It was from here Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians and sent by Timothy. It’s interesting to note that this was Paul’s first letter written to the churches he founded and the oldest letter in the N.T.

During Paul’s short stay in Thessalonica a great number of Greeks and women believed (Acts 17:4). Paul began at once to feed this infant church with the meat of God’s Word. He taught these new believers about the Holy Spirit (1:6), the Trinity (1:6) and of the second coming of Christ (1:10). Paul equipped the new believers in the essentials of practical living in Christ. He answered false charges made against his ministry. He also explained that the Christian dead would participate in the second coming of Christ. The believers were warned against pagan immorality and reminded them to honor and respect their spiritual leaders. Finally, many believers had given up their jobs and were idle as they believed the Lord would return soon. Paul encouraged them to get back to work and be productive for Christ while waiting for His return!

Paul had great concern for these new converts and so he sent Timothy from Athens to strengthen their faith and to bring news of how they were doing. Timothy brought back a good report that comforted Paul's heart. Sadly, because his report also included the news of false teaching that needed to be corrected, Paul wrote this 'heart to heart' letter in response around 50A.D. Paul's relationship to the men and women of Thessalonica is revealed as he refers to the believers as his "brethren". The word "brethren" occurs 14 times in this letter of comfort, instruction and hope. Paul's words to the Thessalonians outlines for us a wonderful example of practical living while living in the last days.

Paul did not try to please others in ways that displeased God.

Paul did not try to capture others by flattery.

Paul was not covetous of what others had.

Paul was not seeking glory for himself out of his work.

Paul kept on task day and night.

Paul always encouraged others.

Paul always began his letter with grace and ended his letter with grace.

Further Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

Shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul received a report (2 Thess. 3:11) that the Thessalonian church had accepted the strange claim that "the day of the Lord has come" (2:1–2). Paul sent them a second letter in A.D. 49–51. He was probably in Corinth at the time.

The letter's main theme is Jesus' second coming. Jesus' return will be preceded by an "apostasy" (or rebellion) and by the appearance of the "man of lawlessness," the Antichrist (2:3). When Jesus comes, he will defeat this rebellious world ruler (2:8). He will bring justice to the oppressed Christians and wrath to unbelievers (1:5–10; 2:9–15).

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians for a few reasons...(1) to reassure those terrified that the day of the Lord had already come (2:1–3:5); (2) to strengthen the Thessalonians in the face of continuing persecution (1:3–12); and (3) to deal with the problem of some of the church members refusing to earn their own living (3:6–15).

Paul assumes that the Thessalonian church knew that the second coming of Jesus Christ would occur at the same time as the coming of the "day of the Lord." Yet the Thessalonians may simply have fallen victim to a belief that the day of the Lord had already come. The persecution they were undergoing may have fueled their confusion about the end times.

Some of the Thessalonians may have stopped working to await and proclaim the second coming. More likely, lazy Christians may have been exploiting the generosity of wealthier Christians in order to avoid work.

In contrast to the warm emotional tone of 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians includes some blunt commands as Paul addresses bad behavior and bad thinking. Further, this letter is noteworthy for Paul's tough-mindedness in predicting judgment on the ungodly and in rebuking church members who behave and think incorrectly. Still, there is a regular swing back and forth between reproof and warm encouragement.