

2 THESSALONIANS

This book has been called “the most applicable prophecy in the New Testament” because it deals with the apostasy prior to Jesus’ second coming. The term “second coming” is a Biblical concept although not an explicitly Biblical term. The term “second coming” was first introduced by Justin Martyr around 150AD.

The Church in Thessalonica was founded approximately one year prior on Paul’s second missionary trip (Acts 17:1-9). Thessalonica was the capital and largest city (~200,000 population) in Macedonia on the major Roman road, “Via Ignatia” (the way of the nations) as an important business center with a key harbor (similar to Corinth).

The two letters to Thessalonica are very similar in topics and language. Scholars suggest that nearly one-third of the material resemble each other. However, the general tone of 2 Thessalonians seems to be more formal than the first letter. The challenges of the church of Thessalonica increase between the time of 1 Thessalonians until 2 Thessalonians. The second letter was written shortly after Paul’s first letter from Corinth (most estimate around 6 months); Paul references the initial letter in this second letter. (2 Thessalonians 2:2, 15; 3:17)

While the first letter to Thessalonica emphasizes “joy during persecution,” the second letter emphasizes God’s judgment on the persecutors of the church. 2 Thessalonians is an emphasis on God’s judgment.

Paul probably wrote both letters to the Thessalonians from Corinth during his second missionary journey making this one of Paul’s earliest writings. (Acts 14:28; 15:2) Paul was in Corinth while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12) which is historically well-defined to be between the summers of 51AD to 53AD.

Paul had spent three weeks in Thessalonica sharing the gospel which was very well received until envious Jews began a riot and turned Thessalonica against God’s message. (Acts 17:1-9) Paul had sent Timothy to encourage the church. The new church continued to have challenges and questions that Paul was determined to clarify.



Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-3 ... Paul Gives Thanks for Church of Thessalonica

1:1 This letter begins by Paul (meaning “little” or “humble”) referencing his companions.

- Silas was only mentioned in the epistles with Paul and Timothy (Acts 15:22-40, 16:19-29, 17:4-15) in both letters to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:1)
 - Luke (the author of Acts) uses the name “Silas” (Hebrew name) while Paul refers to him as “Silvanus” (Roman name).
 - Silas (Silvanus) had been a leader in the church of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22).
 - Silas joined Barnabas in inspecting the church in Antioch (Acts 15:22,30-35)
 - Silas replaced Barnabas on Paul’s second missionary journey while Barnabas joined John Mark in Cyprus. (Acts 15:40) Paul may have been trying to unify the new Gentile church with the established church of Jews in Jerusalem.
 - Silas was a prophet (Acts 15:32) and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37)
- The name “Timothy” means “to honor God.”
 - During Paul’s second mission trip (with Silas), Paul recruited Timothy who was most likely led to Christ by Paul during the first missionary journey (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2).
 - Timothy’s mother (2 Tim 1:5), Eunice (“good victory / conquering well”), was a believing Jew (2 Tim 3:15).
 - Timothy represented the convergence of the church as the Jew (his mother) and the Gentile (his father) were a single family bearing him.
- The Greek word of "ekklesia" (ἐκκλησία) is a reference to the Old Testament gatherings of God’s people.
 - The Septuagint extends "ekklesia" back into the Old Testament assemblies of Israel (Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 16:17; Numbers 14:15, etc. – Hebrew: qahal) as the New Testament church is a heritage of "the gathering" of the Jewish nation under Yahweh.
- The Greek term for “father” (patros πατρὸς) reflects an intimate family connection and interpersonal relationship.
 - Beyond the relationship with God the Son, God is “our” father which is literally the “*father of us*” (patri hēmōn - πατρὶ ἡμῶν) This means that believers are also personally connected with God the Father.
- All three names/aspects of the “*Lord Jesus Christ*” are given. Lord (divine master) Jesus (humanity) Christ (the Messiah).
 - The Greek term for “Lord” (Kyriou Κυρίου) comes from Israel’s Old Testament covenantal name of God. Israel was reluctant to use the name “Yahweh” (YHWH יהוה), so Israel substituted the name “Adonai” (אֲדֹנָי) which means “Lord.” The use of the word “Lord” asserts the full deity of Jesus.
 - The name “Jesus” (meaning “God is Salvation”) was given by an angel to Joseph (Matthew 1:21) and to Mary (Luke 1:31).

- The term “Christ” (Χριστοῦ Χριστοῦ) means “anointed one” for a special purpose or mission. Christ carries the meaning of Messiah from a sacrificial, “suffering servant lifestyle to the point of death.
- 1:2 Peace follows the grace of God. Every spiritual insight and calling begins with the grace of God.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12 ... The Lord Will Judge the Persecutors in Thessalonica

1:3 Paul identifies two areas of growth for the church of Thessalonica: 1. Faith in God 2. Love for One Another

- The description of their faith is that it is “increasing abundantly/exceedingly” (hyperauxanei ὑπεραυξάνει) which was used for vigorous plant growth. (2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Peter 3:18)
 - In the Greek language, the prefix “hyper” (ὑπέρ) means “over” and implies “excess” or “exaggeration.”
- The love of the Thessalonians was the same selfless love (agape ἀγάπη) that God has for His people.
- Paul responds to God’s people in gratitude (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Philippians 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 11:28)

1:4 Paul testifies about two achievements of the Thessalonian church: 1. Perseverance 2. Faith

- The Greek term for “faith” (pisteōs πίστεως) is used over ninety times in the New Testament. The essence of faith depends on the focus of the faith; having faith in a falsehood is an adverse and possibly dangerous action.
- God is the faithful and loyal One. God is true to who He is and the way that He has described Himself.
- Persecution and suffering are to be expected by Christians in a fallen world (Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-16). One outcome of trials is the believer’s spiritual growth (Romans 5:1-5; Hebrews 5:8).

1:5 The (declared) worthiness of the individual for the kingdom of God is reflected by the believer’s persecution (diōgmois διωγμοῖς) and tribulations (thlipsesin θλίψειςιν). (Roman 8:17-18)

- Believers are to walk worthy of the calling as a child of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11)
- God’s holiness necessitates His judgment on sin. (Isaiah 5:16)
- The Greek phrase in this verse is “declared worthy” (kataxiōthēnai καταξιωθῆναι) which can also mean “accounted” or “considered” worthy. “Worthiness” is only determined by the consideration of God. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)
- A “Kingdom” requires a “King” to whom His subjects submit; God is the King of believers who submit and follow His laws while pleasing and praising Him. Currently, the kingdom of God (basileias tou theou – βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ) is in the hearts of obedient men, but will become a physical kingdom at His second coming.

1:6 It is righteous (right) for God to send tribulation on the oppressors of His children.

- Some ask how a loving God could allow so much pain in the world. God clearly states that an unfaithful and wicked world will experience judgment and the consequences of sin. The pain of the world proves the truth of God’s word.
- 1:7 God had foretold Paul’s suffering at his conversion (Acts 9:16). Paul’s ministry had resulted in myriad types of trials that culminated in his martyrdom. (1 Corinthians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 4:8-12; 6:4-10; 11:23-27)
- The Greek term for “revealed” (apokalypsei ἀποκαλύπτει) means to “unveil” or “give a clear manifestation of.” This is the same word that is the title of the last book of the Bible: “apocalypse” or “revelation.” (1 Corinthians 1:7)
 - Scripture repeatedly references the angels surrounding the Lord in His glory. (Deuteronomy 33:2; Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 16:27; 25:31; Mark 8:38; Jude 14; Revelation 19:14)
- 1:8 The Lord Jesus will return in flaming fire to take revenge on those who don’t know God and haven’t obeyed the gospel of Jesus. (Isaiah 29:6; 30:30)
- A common characteristic of God is as a “consuming fire” (Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3; Isaiah 30:27; Lamentations 2:3; Hebrews 12:29).
 - Fire is a symbol of God’s judgment (Isaiah 29:6; 66:14-15; Daniel 7:9-10)
 - *“Sinners in Zion are terrified; Trembling has seized the godless. ‘Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with everlasting burning?’”* (Isaiah 33:14)
 - The Greek term for “retribution/vengeance” (ekdikēsin ἐκδίκησιν) is repeated six times in the New Testament, and it has the same root as the term “righteous” (dikaios δίκαιος). God’s vengeance is related closely to His justice and holiness instead of emotional anger.
 - The same root is in the next verse (2 Thessalonians 1:9) for “penalty/punishment” (dikēn δίκην).
 - Those being punished might be broadly associated with two groups: 1. Gentiles: *“Those who do not know God”* 2. Jews: *“Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*
- 1:9 *“These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”*
- The Greek term for “eternal” (aiōnion αἰώνιον) is used to describe both heaven and hell (Matthew 25:46); it is irrational to believe the heaven is eternal, but hell is only for a limited time.
 - An individual will either be separated from the things of this world in this life or separated from the things of God in the eternity.
 - Eternal damnation is a separation from God’s presence and glory.
 - Psalm 139:8 states that God is in Sheol/Hades; however, the grave is different than an eternal hell separated from God.
- 1:10 The Greek term for “God’s people” (hagious ἁγίους) is the term for “saints” which originated with the term “holy” (to be set apart for God’s service – as in “sanctuary”). The term “saint” is not associated with man’s goodness, but is defined by God’s goodness imputed to man. A saint is a “separated one to an assigned task.” (Romans 1:7, 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 14:33, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 4:21)
- Not a creed or tradition, but the saints are *“of Him”* (autēs αὐτῆς) – a personal relationship with the living Lord.

- Many Jews missed the first incarnation of the Messiah, but Jesus is coming again in His glory.
 - Believers will receive a glorified body when Jesus comes again (Romans 8:29).
 - Believers will “marvel” (thaumasthēnai θαυμασθῆναι) at the amazing blessings from the Lord. (1 Corinthians 2:9)
- 1:11 Paul continuously prayed for the churches that he established (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 5:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:12). God’s plan of salvation is designed according to God’s will in God’s way (Philippians 1:6; 2:13; Ephesians 4:4) as the believers responds to His Spirit (Philippians 2:12; Ephesians 4:1).
- 1:12 The believer is called to live out and magnify the name of the Lord Jesus through an obedient lifestyle. The result will be the believer is glorified with Jesus in eternity.
- The grace (unmerited favor) of God is the foundation for His plan of salvation.

19 2 Thessalonians 2

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 ... The Antichrist Will Preceded the Lord’s 2nd Coming

2:1 The Greek term used in the New Testament for the second coming of Jesus is the “Parousia” (παρουσία) when the lost will be judged and God’s people rewarded. The word “Parousia” (παρουσία) means “presence” and is associated with the concept of preparing for a royal visit.

2:2 Paul warns the church not to be fanatical or deceived. The church had multiple authorities that needed to be judged: 1. Spirits 2. Messages 3. Written Letters

Three Possible False Sources	
Spirits	Supernatural Revelation
Someone Saying	Personal Interpretation
Documents	Writings Claiming Scriptural Authority

- This may be a warning to believers who are eschatologically focused instead of faithfully walking with the Lord each day in faithful watchfulness.
 - The teaching on the second coming was not meant to disrupt the church, but give believers hope for their daily walk.
 - Throughout history, false claims have been made that the “day of the Lord” has arrived. (Matthew 24:23, 26)
- 2:3 The “son of perdition” is used twice in the Bible – once for Judas (John 17:12) and once for the antichrist (Daniel 7:8, 11:36; Revelation 13:1)

Events Occurring Before the End Times	
The Great Apostacy & Falling Away	2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 3; Matthew 24:10-13
Gospel Preached to All	Matthew 24:14 – Revelation 14:6
Revelation of Antichrist	2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelations 13
Full Number of Gentiles Saved	Romans 9-11

- During the end times, there will be a final confrontation of the nations against the Lord. (Psalm 2; Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 12-14).

Specific Individual Leading Rebellion	
Genesis 3:15	The Serpent
Isaiah 14	The King of Babylon

Ezekiel 28	The King of Tyre
Daniel 7-12	The “Little Horn”
John 2:18	Antichrist
Revelation 13	Beast & False Prophet

- John refers to the evil individual as “Antichrist” while Paul refers to the individual as “the Lawless One.”

New Testament Descriptions of the End Times	
Jesus’ Description	Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21
Paul’s Description	1 & 2 Thessalonians
John’s Description	1 John 2; Revelation 13

2:4 The end of times antichrist will commit the abomination of desecration (Matthew 24:15; Hosea 6; Deuteronomy 7:25). A political figure will place his seat of authority in a religious sanctuary to rule as he tries to take the place of God in men’s lives. (Isaiah 14:13-14; Ezekiel 28:2; Daniel 7:25; 11:36)

- Although the spirit of the antichrist has been present with mankind in every age throughout history, he will be physically personified in a single man at the end times. (1 John 2:18)

2:5 Paul had preached in Thessalonica for three Sabbaths and the church had received verbal instruction and teaching that Paul is now referencing. (Acts 17:2-3)

2:6 God has a divine plan that will release the antichrist into the world at a specified time when the restrainer is removed.

- The Greek term “*to be unveiled*” (apokalyphthēnai ἀποκαλυφθῆναι) means “to be revealed” and correlates to the “revelation” of Jesus at the end times. (Revelation 1:1)
- The antichrist will probably mimic Jesus at his coming with signs and wonders.

2:7 The “mystery” (mystērion μυστήριον) in Scripture often refers to the unifying work of the Spirit beyond the Jews to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-6). The “restrainer” (katechōn κατέχων) might also refer to the Holy Spirit who holds back destructive chaos of the wicked one.

- He who restrains, the Holy Spirit, will be taken up (much like Christ) as will those with the Holy Spirit indwelling them (Romans 8:9)

2:8 The Lord will slay – just as He created - with His mouth (Revelation 1:16; Isaiah 11:4; Job 4:9; Daniel 8:25)

- The Greek term “*to slay*” (anelei ἀνελεῖ) can be translated as “make inoperative” or make null and void. (Romans 6:6)

2:9 These works of the “lawless one” will be impressive, supernatural wonders (Matthew 24:24-25). A miracle is not automatically the sign of God. (Exodus 7:11-12,22; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Mark 13:22; Revelation 13)

2:10 Only those who receive the love of the truth will be saved (1 Kings 22:19-23; Ezekiel 14:9)

- Unbelievers can be spiritually deceived and tricked (Matthew 13:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4) which is also true of believers (Ephesians 4:14).
- Believers have love for “the Truth” which goes beyond facts about Jesus to a loving relationship with Jesus Himself.

2:11 God Himself will send the delusion to all who took pleasure in unrighteousness (Romans 1:24, 26, 28)

2:12 Judgment will come on those who have willingly rejected the gospel message of salvation and sanctification. This is not ignorance; this is a informed refusal and denial of the truth in order to pursue sin.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 ... Encouragement to Stand Firm in God's Strength

2:13 However, God chose His elect before the beginning of time (Ephesians 1:4; John 17:24, 1 Peter 1:20, Jeremiah 1:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:2, Revelation 17:8, 2 Timothy 1:9)

- The Trinity is active in the salvation of God's people.

2:14 God chose His people before time for His plan (Ephesians 1:4, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:7).

2:15 Paul encourages those in Thessalonica to remain true to God's Word instead of shifting with ever-changing societal trends (1 Thessalonians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:11,13)

2:16 The full title is recorded as the Lord (deity) Jesus (humanity) Christ (Messiah). (Romans 10:13; Philippians 2:9). God (theos θεός) is the father of believers.

2:17 God is the source of strength and joy in the actions and speech of believers.

20 2 Thessalonians 3

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 ... Request for Prayer & God's Strength

3:1 Paul believed in the power of prayer as he performed His ministry through God's power. Paul repeatedly asked for prayer support. (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18-19; Philippians 1:19; Colossians 4:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:25)

- Paul would use the word "finally" (λοιπόν λοιπόν) to mark a concluding section of a final major truth or subject (2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 3:1, 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:1).
- The word of the Lord was growing broadly as it spread in and around Thessalonica, but it was also growing deeply into glorified (honoring) lives for Christ. (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

3:2 Those without faith are not only wicked, but also irrational (Is 1:18; 1 Cor 3:19-20); how does one explain away each of the different categories of realities:

- fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament
- scientific insight into nature millennia before "discovery"
- scientific support of intelligent design
- current world events with the small nation of Israel as the centerpiece
- the interconnectedness of scripture (written by 40 different authors over 2,000 years)

3:3 The Greek term "faithful" (πιστός πιστός) is used 33 times in the New Testament and means that God's word can be trusted as He is loyal and true. The etymology originated with the concept of firm and solid footing.

- The Greek term for "guard" (φυλάξει φυλάξει) means to "keep" and protect as His own (1 John 5:18). Defense against the "evil one" comes from God's power (Matthew 5:37, 6:13, 13:19, 38; John 17:15; Ephesians 6:11; 1 John 2:13, 3:12; 5:18).

- Satan is a created being who is limited in power, so this is not a cosmic dualism. God controls and limits Satan at will (Job 1; Revelation 12:7-12)
- 3:4 Submission and obedience to God’s word overcomes the intent of the evil one. The power comes from the Lord.
- 3:5 God will give His people the love and patience of Christ (Habakkuk 3:17-18; Luke 21:19)
- The Greek term for “direct” (kateuthynai κατευθῆναι) means to “guide.” The etymology of the word is related to removing obstacles from the road and infers a well-worn path. (Luke 1:79; 1 Thessalonians 3:11)
 - The name of “Christ” is utilized as Paul emphasizes the sacrificial Messiah as the suffering servant.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 ... Command to Work & Persevere in Doing Good

- 3:6 In ancient times, the “name” (onomati ὀνόματι) was very important as the name characterized the identify and life of the individual. The name is the characteristic and authority of the Lord.
- The believer is told to separate from someone whose existence is defined by conflict and independent, man-made concepts.
 - The Greek term for “unruly” (ataktōs ἀτάκτως) means to be disorderly and insubordinate.
- 3:7 Although Paul proclaimed the gospel and return of Jesus, Paul also worked for his food, so that he would not be a burden to believing brothers. (Acts 18:3; 2 Corinthians 11:9).
- 3:8 Paul worked a second job to not charge this congregation for His ministry (Acts 18:2-3; 1 Corinthians 9:12,18; 11:7; 2 Corinthians 11:9; 12:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:9).
- Paul did collect charity for the poor who were suffering through a famine in Jerusalem. (Romans 15:26-29; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 2:10).
- 3:9 Paul believed that ministers should receive pay (1 Corinthians 9:4-17; Galatians 6:6).
- 3:10 *“If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat.”* - not if anyone doesn’t work, but if anyone isn’t willing to work; those who are willing, but not capable should be fed.

A Biblical View of Work	
Work existed before sin & the curse	Genesis 2:15
Toilsome work was part of the curse	Genesis 3:19
Work is expected of all men	Deuteronomy 5:13
Work is a gift from God	Exodus 31:3; 35:35; Isaiah 54:16
Work as unto the Lord	Ephesians 6:7; Colossians 3:17

- 3:11 Paul rebukes those who are busy judging others instead of serving in loving ways themselves.
- 3:12 Believers should not be “busybodies” of other people’s affairs, but instead work quietly and be satisfied with the products of your hands (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:2)
- 3:13 “Doing good” is difficult and challenging. It often includes getting your hands dirty and doing what you otherwise would not do. Believers should encourage each other along the faithful walk. (Luke 18:1; Galatians 6:9; 2 Corinthians 4:1)

- Some believers only give by exception while others faithfully live exceptional lives.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 ... Treatment of Believers Who Disregard God's Word

3:14 Believers should not keep company with the Christian brother who disregards God's Word

3:15 Church discipline consists of teaching, growing and reconciliation. The purpose of church discipline is redemptive and not vindictive. (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18 ... Closing Comments to the Church of Thessalonica

3:16 Paul repeatedly refers to God as the "God of Peace" (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20).

- Paul exclaims the universal nature of God's omnipresence with every believer.

3:17 Paul would often confirm the truth that this came from him. (2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; Philemon 1:19)

3:18 Paul repeatedly concluded his letter with "grace" because God's gift of grace was the foundation of everything else. "Grace" is always a reminder of God's sovereign goodness and gifts.