

# 2ND THESSALONIANS



DBA

JOINT BIBLE STUDY

A Study Outline for Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to the Thessalonians

*This brief study is based on the NKJV Study Bible*

# 2ND THESSALONIANS

## JOINT BIBLE STUDY

### A BRIEF OVERVIEW

**Book Details:** 2 Thessalonians is the 53rd book in the Holy Bible and the 14th book in the New Testament. It contains 3 Chapters and 47 verses. Apart from Philemon, it is the shortest of all Paul's epistles.

**Author and Date:** Paul is the author of 2 Thessalonians. He identifies himself in the introduction (1:1) and also in the conclusion (3:17). Paul specially mentions that the concluding salutation is written in his own handwriting (3:17). The epistle was written by Paul shortly after 1 Thessalonians, around A.D. 51 or 52 while he was staying at Corinth.

**Location Details:** During Paul's time, Thessalonica was a prominent seaport and the capital city of the Roman province of Macedonia. This prosperous city was located on the Via Egnatia, the Roman highway from Rome to Byzantium in the East. This important highway and the busy port made Thessalonica one of the wealthiest trade centers of the Roman Empire. During the 1st century A.D., the city had a population of around 200,000 which included a sizable Jewish population. However, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 we are told that the city was given over to idol worship.



**Thessalonian Church Background:** Thessalonica was one of the first cities in Europe to be evangelized by Paul and Silas during the 2nd missionary Journey (A.D. 50-53). After his ministry at Philippi, Paul travelled a hundred miles and came to Thessalonica. The church was planted as a result of Paul's preaching in the Jewish synagogue for only three Sabbath days (three weeks). Within such a short span of time, Paul reaped a great success, not only among the Jews but also among God-fearing Greeks. Paul had a clear plan for the Thessalonian church. Because of its strategic location in a geographical center, he hoped Thessalonica would become a base for the spread of gospel in the surrounding regions of Macedonia and Greece. From 1 Thessalonians 1:8 we understand that Paul's hope did not go in vain.

The notable feature of the Thessalonian Church was that it was a church planted in the midst of severe persecution. (Acts 17:1-9). The unbelieving Jews who were jealous on account of Paul's success among the Jews and Greeks and because Christians were drawing God-fearing gentiles away from the local synagogue, hired evil men and raised an angry attack on Paul. They falsely accused them with sedition charges against Caesar, saying that they taught about another King, Jesus. Paul had to flee at night to Berea and when his persecutors followed him there also, Paul eventually left for Athens and finally arrived at Corinth. Paul was however very much burdened about the new church at Thessalonica and he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to find out about them. Timothy returned with an encouraging report: The Thessalonian Church was enduring despite persecution. Not only that, but the testimony of the Thessalonians' steadfast faith was spreading throughout Macedonia (1 Thess. 1:8). This report occasioned the writing of 1 Thessalonians by Paul to encourage the young church and to answer some of questions they had sent through Timothy. Following this, some misunderstanding arose in their midst about the end times and false teaching began to creep into the Church. So Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians soon after to address these concerns.

**Purpose:** 2 Thessalonians was written to replace error with truth. As pointed out earlier, Paul's teaching about the 'imminent return of Christ' in 1 Thessalonians had created some misunderstanding among certain believers who had stopped working altogether and had become lazy and idle. To add to the confusion, certain false teachers had begun to teach the believers that the day of the Lord had already arrived. Perhaps the severity of the persecution they underwent might have occasioned this view. Therefore, with an aim to correct misunderstandings; to counter false doctrine and to impart a right understanding concerning the second coming of the Lord, Paul writes 2 Thessalonians shortly after he wrote 1 Thessalonians.

**Themes:** The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is an event to be looked forward to; but not be used as an excuse for idleness. The 'day of the Lord' has not yet come, because prior to that; the Great Apostasy ought to take place and the man of lawless ought to appear on the scene. Believers have been called by God and saved through Christ's work and therefore they ought to stand firm in Christ (2:15) and work hard (3:12) and persist in doing good (3:13); while waiting patiently for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ in 2 Thessalonians:** As in his first letter, Paul presents Jesus as the joyful hope of all Christians. His eventual return will right all wrongs. In 1:6-10 Paul presents to us a 'Glorified Christ' who is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

## 2 THESSALONIANS – AN OUTLINE

### Encouragement to faithfulness in spite of persecution [1:1-12]

- Salutation 1:1,2
- Thankfulness for their faithfulness 1:3-5
- Assurance of judgment on their persecutors 1:6-10
- Prayer for their glorification 1:11, 12

### Explanations concerning the day of the Lord [2:1-17]

- Correction of the false teaching that the day of the Lord had begun 2:1,2
- Evidence that the day of the Lord had not begun 2:3-12
- God's work in believers and the believers' response 2:13-17

### Exhortation to continued faithfulness to God [3:1-15]

- Desire for prayer and continued service for God 3:1-5
- Idleness condemned 3:6-15

### Benediction of grace and peace [3:16-18]

## CHAPTER 1:

### Encouragement to faithfulness in spite of persecution [1:1-12]

**v.01** Paul, Silas and Timothy, the authors of 1 Thessalonians were also the authors and editors of 2 Thessalonians. As there has been no change in the writers, this is a sign that 2 Thessalonians was written soon after 1 Thessalonians.

**To the Church:** The Greek word for Church “**ekklesia**” means ‘**gathering**’ or ‘**assembly**’. See the position of the Thessalonian Church – in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**v.02** Paul greets the Church with two essential gifts from God to man; Grace and Peace. **Grace** is the unmerited favour God gives to believers through Jesus Christ. **Peace** refers to the end of enmity between God and people. The Thessalonian Church experienced both of these in good measure. The Grace of God alone turned them from serving idols to serve the living and true God (1Thess. 1:9). The peace of God that surpasses all understanding alone gave them the inner resolve to endure persecution with patience.

**v.03** Paul thanks God because the Thessalonian Church remained faithful in the midst of persecution. His prayer for them in 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 3:10 & 4:9-10) were being answered. Their growth was above and beyond natural expectation; see Paul’s usage of words, ‘**exceedingly**’ and ‘**abound**’.

**v.04** Enduring persecution with patience and steadfast faith will help to provide a testimony for Christ and is a matter of praise to His name.

**v.05-06** Persecution against believers has yet another purpose. It will be means to manifest or display the righteousness of God; for the judgment of God requires that the unrighteous be punished for their persecution of the righteous. Moreover, enduring persecution has a reward attached to it; one will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

**v.07-08** **Rest** is the relief from affliction that will come at Christ’s return. For a believer, life on earth is spiritual warfare. He will find true rest only in the presence of the Lord. This promise of a future rest helps suffering Christian to endure present trials.

**The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed:** The Greek word for revealed is ‘**apokalupsis**’ from which the English word ‘**apocalypse**’ is derived. It means ‘**the revelation**’ or ‘**the unveiling**’ of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His Glory. During the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ as a babe in Bethlehem, His Glory was ‘veiled’ because he left his Glory aside. The world did not ‘know’ Him. But now the world will see Him as He is (Rev. 1:7) Note the three-fold description of His revealing; **from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire**. This refers to the Lord’s coming back to the earth, after the Rapture and at the end of the seven year tribulation period. **The Lord’s vengeance will be on two groups of people:** 1) those who do not know God [unbelieving Gentiles] 2) those who do not obey the Gospel [unbelieving Jews who knew about God but who rejected His Son]. Observe here that the basis for the Lord’s Judgment will be knowing (believing) and obedience.

**v.09** The enemies of God who were persecuting the believers will be punished with **everlasting destruction**. The word destruction here does not mean annihilation, because otherwise the **adjective ‘everlasting’** would become meaningless. It refers to the awful fate of those who reject Jesus, eternal separation from God, a ruined existence.

**v.10-12** **When He comes, in that Day:** That Day, as already noted, is reference to the Glorious appearance of the Lord back to the earth. However the usage of the word ‘**Come**’ in relation to believers is noteworthy. The Greek word for come, ‘**parousia**’ means the ‘**arrival or the presence of**’. While for the unbelievers, the Lord’s second coming will be an ‘unveiling’ of one whom they do not know, for the believers it will be the ‘**arrival**’ or the ‘**tangible presence**’ of the one whom they knew all along with ‘eyes of faith’.

**Glorified in His saints:** Christ will be glorified not only among the saints but also in the saints, for believers reflect the glory of the Lord.

**Worthy of this calling:** The worth of the calling derives from the worth of the person who gave out the call, who is none other than God Himself, with the purpose that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified in His Saints! **A high calling indeed!**



## STUDY EVALUATION:

### 2 Thessalonians - Overview

01. How do we know that Paul was the author of 2 Thessalonians?
02. During which missionary journey was Thessalonica evangelized?
03. How long did Paul minister at Thessalonica?
04. What was the outstanding feature of the Thessalonian Church?
05. What was the report Timothy brought about the Thessalonian Church?
06. What was the purpose of writing 2 Thessalonians?
07. What are the themes you can find in 2 Thessalonians?
08. How does Paul portray Christ in 2 Thessalonians?
09. Which Bible passage describes Paul's ministry at Thessalonica? Read the passage carefully.
10. In your own words describe 5 qualities of the Thessalonian Church.

### Chapter 1

01. How can we establish that 2 Thessalonians was written immediately after 1 Thessalonians?
02. Where, according to Paul is the NT Church positioned? According to you, what is its significance?
03. Define the terms Grace and Peace? Examine their effects in your own life.
04. What 2 words indicate that the growth of the Thessalonian Church was outstanding?
05. What according to Paul is one of the direct results of growing in faith?
06. What could be one of the reasons behind the persecution of the believers by the unrighteous?
07. "Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven." What does this refer to? When does it take place?
08. Explain the term 'everlasting destruction'. For whom is this applicable?
09. What is the ultimate purpose of God's calling?
10. Based on Chapter 1, what will precede the Rapture?
11. Compare and contrast Christ's Glorious appearance with The Incarnation.
12. Compare and contrast Christ's Revelation with The Rapture.

**PRACTICAL STUDY TIPS:**

01. Based on your study, prepare a list of key words and key verses of chapter 1.
02. Note down every verse that refers to the second coming of Christ in chapter 1.
03. Identify the 'prayers' included in the chapter and note down its practical implications.
04. List down the practical life applications that you see in this chapter.
05. What is the main general content of Chapter 1 and write down what Paul is trying to tell his readers.



## CHAPTER 2:

### Explanations concerning the day of the Lord [2:1-17]

**v.01-02** These two verses are in response to a report that Paul received concerning the believers in Thessalonica, that they were being misled by false teachers who were confusing them with wrong ideas about the Second coming of the Lord.

**Our gathering together:** The Greek word for 'gathering together' refers to the congregation of the whole church and may refer to the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:17) when for the first time the whole church, including every believer will be gathered before the Lord in midair to worship Him.

**Either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us:** Paul cites three possible sources of deceit: [1] **a spirit** (from a deceiving spirit not from God) [2] **a teaching** (wrong teaching & heresies) [3] **a letter**, as if from us (i.e. a forged letter – scholars are of the opinion that the cause of all the confusion was a forged letter and report that was sent out to the Thessalonians purportedly by Apostle Paul containing the wrong teachings) The false teaching was that the day of the Lord had already come and that the reason for all the persecutions they were facing was because they were passing through the great tribulation that should occur during the second coming of the Lord.

**v.03** In order to counter false teaching, Paul emphatically states that he had never taught that the Day of the Lord had already come. And the proof for that is that the Day of the Lord will not come unless two events take place. [1] **The great Apostasy** (falling away) [2] **The man of sin is revealed.**

**The falling away:** The Greek word used for falling away commonly means a '**military rebellion**'. But in the Bible, the word is used for 'rebellion against God' which will prepare the way for the Antichrist. The Greek word can also be translated as '**departure**', in which case it could be a reference to the Rapture. That is to say, the man of sin cannot be revealed until Christ comes to take His church to be with Him. So the usage of this word could refer to a Spiritual departure from faith (falling away) or it could refer to a Physical departure (the Rapture).

**The man of Sin:** Paul does not mention the title Antichrist for this man, but his description parallels John's description of the Antichrist (1 John 2:18; Rev.13). This man of sin will lead the world into rebellion against God.

**v.04 In the temple of God:** Towards the middle of the Tribulation period, the man of sin (the antichrist) will proclaim himself to be divine and demand worship. He will probably set up his image or stand in the physical temple in Jerusalem to declare himself to be god, resulting in the ultimate fulfillment of the

'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel (Dan. 9:26-27; 11:31,36,37) and by Jesus (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14).

**v.05 Do you not remember:** This is a reference to the teaching imparted by Paul about the Second Coming in his first letter to the Thessalonians. (1Thess. 4:13 – 5:11).

**v.07 Already at work:** The evil and deception underlying all lawlessness is already existing in the present world. John states that there are many antichrists presently at work (1 John 2:18). Anyone who opposes Christ and His Church and seeks to deceive others into worshipping false gods is against Christ and in that sense is an antichrist.

**He who now restrains:** For the man of sin to be revealed, the present restrainer, probably the Spirit of God, had to be taken out of the world. God restrains sin in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Taken out of the way:** Some interpret this as a reference to the Rapture, for the church cannot exist without the Spirit's presence. Thus the removal of the church by the rapture will result in the removal of all restraint on the power of sin in this world.

**v.08** Although the man of sin will be revealed as very powerful (Rev.13:7), he will be destroyed by Christ and cast into the lake of fire when the Lord comes (Rev. 19:19-20).

**v.09** The lawless one is backed by Satan. Note here that in order to deceive people and establish the lie that he is god, Satan uses the same kind of power, signs and wonders that the Spirit of Christ used at the beginning of the Church age to establish the truth about Christ (2 Cor.12:12; Heb. 2:4).

**v.12 Who did not believe the truth:** We see here the basis for condemnation. Rejection of the truth of the gospel always results in condemnation. Even those who never hear the gospel can reject the revelation of God in nature (Rom. 1:18-21).

**v.13 Give thanks:** Paul felt bound to give thanks to God for the salvation of the Thessalonian believers, because it was a result of God's choice of them and His work in them through the Spirit and the Word.

**Chose:** The Greek tense of this word indicates that God had chosen the Thessalonians to be His people in the past; i.e. right from the beginning.

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**Sanctification:** to set apart for a Holy purpose or use. The relation between Spirit and the Truth (God's word) is made clear here. The Spirit without the Word is mute; He has nothing to say. The Word without the Spirit is lifeless; it has no power to act.

**v. 14 Our gospel:** This is the Gospel of Christ (1Thess. 3:2) and Gospel of God the Father (1 Thess. 2:8) that Christ died for sinners. But when Paul now says 'our gospel' it shows the great responsibility of every believer who has been placed in the 'household of God' to proclaim the gospel to those who are not yet in God's household.

**Obtaining of the Glory:** As we already saw in 1 Thess. 1:10, we see again the purpose behind God's calling. The Thessalonians were called by God alone and they were already saved (v.13). It was now their responsibility to prepare on this earth for a glorious future with Christ by living in a holy manner.

**v. 15 Traditions:** normally the word is used to refer to human traditions and instructions passed on from one person to another. But here Paul is referring to the revealed truth of God that contains no error that was taught by the Apostles and by him.

**Epistle:** Paul is referring to the truth that he had passed on to them through his first epistle and the clarification of the truth that he was communicating through his second epistle. We need to bear in mind that the New Testament had not yet been written at this point and Christian faith was being communicated only by the apostles' preaching (tradition) and their letters.

**v. 16-17** At the end of Chapter 2, Paul prays that God would encourage and establish the Thessalonians in the truth, even as he continues with his instructions in Chapter 3.

**Comfort and Establish:** Who is it who comforts and who is it who establishes? We are told in beginning of v16 that is a plurality of the Lord Jesus Christ and God the father who comforts and establishes. This is an indication of the unity and equality of these two Persons of the Godhead (see 1 Thess. 3:11).



## STUDY EVALUATION:

### Chapter 2

01. What does the term 'gathering together' mean?
02. What was the false teaching that Apostle Paul was trying to correct? What could have been a possible source for this false teaching?
03. What is the evidence that the Day of the Lord has not yet come?
04. What are the two possible interpretations for the usage 'falling away'?
05. Who is the 'man of sin'? What is his role in the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding 'abomination of desolation'?
06. Why does Paul say that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work? Who is the one who is restraining the lawless one?
07. Cite an example for God's 'election' from 2 Thessalonians.
08. Describe the relation in the working of the Spirit and the Word of God with regards to man's salvation.
09. Describe the terms 'tradition' and 'epistle' and explain their contribution in conveying the Christian faith.
10. Demonstrate the unity and equality of God the father and Lord Jesus Christ from the second chapter.

### PRACTICAL STUDY TIPS:

01. Based on your study, prepare a list of key words and key verses of chapter 2.
02. Note down every verse that refers to the second coming of Christ in chapter 2.
03. Identify the 'prayers' included in the chapter and note down its practical implications.
04. List down the practical life applications that you see in this chapter.
05. What is the main general content of Chapter 2 and write down what Paul is trying to tell his readers.
06. Continue to study further, the references to the term 'the day of the Lord' in the Bible.

