

New Testament Survey Class 17
2 Thessalonians

Author: 2 Thessalonians is widely debated but most still affirm it as written by the Apostle Paul. The debate centers on vocabulary and idiosyncrasies in style. Another argument is that the eschatology of 2 Thessalonians differs from that of 1 Thessalonians since 2 Thessalonians teaches that the Second Coming of Christ will be preceded by an observable event, the 'appearance of the Man of Lawlessness'...while 1 Thessalonians teaches that Christ's return will be sudden and unexpected. But, 1 Thessalonians 5 suggests that the end will be unanticipated by unbelievers, not believers. Both letters are brief responses to issues or problems among the Thessalonians, and should not be set against each other.

Date: This also is not widely debated as nearly all scholars see 2 Thessalonians as following closely on the heels of 1 Thessalonians, written in AD 51 or 52.

Audience: Paul writes to relatively new believers in Thessalonica, a major military and commercial port located on the Via Egnatia.

Second Thessalonians was written to correct the ongoing issue of enduring in the face of persecution and on the other hand those who had become 'so Heavenly minded they were no earthly good'. Some had become frantic about the return of Christ while others had taken to living off the generosity of fellow believers. Paul wanted to correct both errors.

Structure:

New Testament Survey Class 17
2 Thessalonians

Greeting and Thanksgiving

1:1,2 Greeting

1:3-10 Thanksgiving Baracha for the Thessalonians Perseverance under persecution

1:11,12 Prayer of Intercession for their continued growth and fruitfulness

Instruction Regarding Jesus' Coming and Christian Conduct

2:1-12 The Role of the Man of Lawlessness

2:13-15 Exhortation to Stand Firm

2:16-17 Prayer for God's empowering in Life and Ministry

Request for Prayer and Warning against Idleness

3:1-3 Paul's request for himself

3:4-15 Warning against Laziness and Idleness

3:16-18 Final Greetings and Benediction

Chapter One

Paul's brief introduction and opening comments suggest that while there are issues Paul is generally pleased with their spiritual condition

The claim that it is just for God to repay is based on Israel's understanding of who Yahweh is as Lord of History and King of the Nations, see Joel 3:1-3; Deut 32:35; Ps 138:8; Is 63:4 and Is 66:6 and 15.

This will occur at the Second Coming of Christ, 1:8 perhaps recalling Ex 3:2 and Is 66:15. Paul seeks to encourage the Thessalonians by teaching that God will judge their persecutors and a much larger group 'those who do not know God'. Job 18:21; Ps 79:6.

New Testament Survey Class 17
2 Thessalonians

1:9 These will be banned from God's presence which will issue in eternal destruction. This is opposite destiny of the Thessalonians who are pictured in 4:17; 5:10 as those who will 'always be with the Lord.'

Believers at the return of Christ will share in His glory recalling Ps 88:8...as we will see again and again in the NT and Paul in particular, texts originally referring to Yahweh are now applied to Christ.

Paul closes this section with a prayer that asks that the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified in you and you in Him, language similar to that found in Is 66:5.

Chapter Two: The Day of the Lord

The Church had been driven to doubt and confusion by a claim that the Day of the Lord had already come, so Paul writes to assure them, outlining the progression that must precede the Day of the Lord, and begins to describe the "Man of Lawlessness". Paul returns to the widespread hope and expectation that God would 'gather' his people to himself see 1 Thess 4 as well as Ps 106:47; Is 27:13; 43:4-7; 49:12; 56:8; Jer 29:14 and many more.

Before Christ returns there will be a great apostasy and the "Man of Lawlessness" will be revealed. Paul may be referring back to Ps 88:23 as he thinks of the Man of Lawlessness and Is 57:3,4 also Dan 11:36 like Antiochus Epiphanes. Also in history the Roman General Pompey in 63 BC entered the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, and in AD 40 Caligula sought to erect a statue of himself in the Temple...so Paul draws a familiar picture of evil. But when this evil one is revealed he will not succeed as Paul recalls Is 11:4.

The followers of the Man of Lawlessness will be deceived by false signs and wonders and God will allow them to be deluded and confirm them in their delusion.

Chapter 3: Closing Exhortations

New Testament Survey Class 17
2 Thessalonians

This time of waiting...is to be characterized by prayer and labor...like Jesus we are to be about our Father's business...our lives and thoughts, and hopes are to be Kingdom oriented...we are a people of hope...and we endure in that hope of the Coming Day of the Lord.

Note that the benediction echoes the benediction given to Aaron in Numbers 6:26. Note as well the typical Jewish greeting 'The Lord be with you' see Judges 6:12; Ruth 2:4 reflecting Paul's understanding Yahweh in the person of His Son Jesus is always present with His followers see Phil 4:5 and 2 Tim 4:22 and Mt 28:20.