

## **Book of 2 Thessalonians**

### **Title:**

In the Greek New Testament, 2 Thessalonians is listed as “To the Thessalonians”.

This represents the Apostle Paul’s second canonical correspondence to the fellowship of believers in the city of Thessalonica (compare 1:1).

### **Author – Date:**

Paul, as in 1 Thessalonians, identified himself twice as the author of this letter (1:1, 3:17).

Silvanus (Silas), and Timothy, Paul’s co-laborer’s in founding the church, were present with him when he wrote.

Evidence, both within this letter and regarding vocabulary, style and doctrinal content, strongly supports Paul as the only possible author.

The time of this writing was surely a few months after the first epistle, while Paul was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (1:1, Acts 18:5; in late A.D. 51 or early A.D. 52).

### **Background – Setting:**

For the history of Thessalonica (see introduction to 1 Thessalonians).

Some have suggested that Paul penned this letter from Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21), but his eighteenth month stay in Corinth provided ample time for both of the Thessalonian epistles to be authored (Acts 18:11).

Apparently, Paul had stayed apprised of the happenings in Thessalonica through correspondence and/or couriers.

Perhaps the bearer of the first letter brought Paul back an update on the condition of the church, which had matured and expanded (1:3); but pressure and persecution had also increased.

The seeds of false doctrine concerning the Lord had been sown, and the people’s behavior was disorderly.

So, Paul wrote to his beloved flock who were:

- (1) Discouraged by persecution and needed incentive to persevere;

- (2) Deceived by false teachers who confused them about the Lord's return; and
- (3) Disobedient to divine commands, particularly by refusing to work.

Paul wrote to address those 3 issues by offering:

- (1) Comfort for the persecuted believers (1:3-12);
- (2) Correction for the falsely taught and frightened believers (2:1-15); and
- (3) Confrontation for the disobedient and undisciplined believers (3:6-15).

### **Historical – Theological:**

Although chapters 1 and 2 contain much prophetic material because the main issue was a serious misunderstanding generated by false teachers about the coming Day of the Lord (Paul reveals that the Day had not come and would not until certain other events occur), it is still best to call this "a pastoral letter".

The emphasis is on how to maintain a healthy church with an effective testimony in proper response to sound eschatology and obedience to the truth.

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is a follow up to the first.

It appears to have been written shortly after 1 Thessalonians, in response to certain reports that had come to the apostle regarding the Thessalonians' progress (3:11).

Paul was still in Corinth and unable to leave his work there.

However, he continued to maintain a keen interest in the little church to the north which had shown such promise (1:3-4), despite some continuing serious problems.

While Paul was encouraged by their faith and steadfastness, he could see that many in the assembly were still very confused about the second coming of Christ.

Paul even suggests the possibility that some are deliberately misrepresenting his teaching on this all-important subject (2:2).

The possibility of such a deception is supported by counterfeit letters purportedly written by the apostle.

He exhorts them to pay special attention to his signature so that they may distinguish the genuine letters from the false (3:17).

Paul knows the ultimate source of this trouble is Satan himself, the “evil one” (3:3), and he is confident that the Lord will protect them.

Nevertheless, this misunderstanding had left many in the church to forsake their occupations, to lead undisciplined lives, and to breed unrest among the people by becoming busybodies and beggars, living off those who still maintained gainful employment (3:6-15).

Still others had become discouraged, thinking the day of the Lord had already begun and that they had somehow missed it.

They had expected Christ to destroy their enemies.

Yet they were still suffering persecution.

Paul addresses these problems.

He explains that while the time of the Lord’s coming cannot be predicted, it will be a spectacular event that no one could miss.

Furthermore, if the day of the Lord had already begun, then many other events would already have taken place (2:1-12).

Since they had seen none of these events happening, they could be sure they had not missed the Lord’s return.

In the meantime, they should take heart in the fact that from the start, God’s purpose was to include them in the glorious event of Christ’s coming (2:13-14).

As for those who were presuming upon the good graces of their brethren, they should get to work or expect not to eat (3:6-15).

### **Theme:**

Eschatology dominates the theological issues.

One of the clearest statements on personal eschatology for unbelievers is found (in 1:9), Church discipline is the major focus of (3:6-15), which needs to be considered along with (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 6:1-5; and 1 Timothy 5:19-20), for understanding the complete Biblical teaching on this theme.