

2 THESSALONIANS

Introduction

Author. The authorship of this letter has been questioned more than that of the first letter to the Thessalonians. However, the book has more support from early Christian writers and most questions about the book arise from internal differences of vocabulary and style which, by nature, tend towards the subjective.

Date. The date is probably several weeks to a few months after the first epistle, again, somewhere near 51 A. D.

Occasion. Please see *Occasion* in 1 Thessalonians.

Message Statement. *The second coming of Christ will bring relief for the persecuted, destruction for the wicked and motivates holy living now.*

Argument

- 1A SALUTATION 1:1-2
Paul's introduction is very short indicating good relations with the recipients. This letter needs little introduction as it follows soon after the first letter.
- 1B COMFORT GIVEN TO THEM IN THEIR AFFLICTION 1:3-12
As in the first letter Paul includes encouragement for the Thessalonians in regard to their suffering. The basic message of comfort here comes from the knowledge that their persecutors will receive redress for their crimes at the second coming of Christ.
- 1B Thanksgiving For and Boasting About Them 1:3-4
The trials of the Thessalonians were a stimulus to their growth. Paul is pleased with, thanks God for, and boasts to others about their growth.
- 2B The Retribution of the Wicked 1:5-10
Paul teaches in this passage that the righteous will be given relief at the second coming of Christ. This has caused some to conclude that the basis of relief for the Christian (presumed to be the rapture) will not occur until the end of the tribulation. In context, however, the definition of *relief* is the consolation which comes from the retribution of the wicked. The message of the whole passage concerns not simply absence of persecution (which a pretribulation rapture would certainly provide) but more importantly, the just payment of the wicked for their persecution of the righteous. This kind of relief, desired by the souls of those under the altar (Revelation 6:10), will only come at the end of the tribulation, i.e., the second coming.
- 3B Prayer For Them in Persecution 1:11-12
Given the seriousness of this topic Paul's thoughts move to prayer for the readers. He prays that God would fulfill their desires and ultimately that God would be glorified through it all.
- 1C EVENTS PRECEDING THE DAY OF THE LORD 2:1-12
Evidently the Thessalonians had been alarmed by some report or message allegedly from Paul that the Day of the Lord had come. Paul discusses some of the events of the tribulation, giving revelation here of the man of sin which is not found elsewhere in his epistles.

- 1B The Appeal for Calm 2:1-2
Paul first appeals for calm, assuring these believers who were so interested in the second coming that the tribulation had not yet begun. Paul combats the idea that the final days had begun and that their completion would be imminent.
- 2B The Two Events Which Precede the Day of the Lord 2:3-12
Two events which must occur before the great day of the Lord are the great apostasy and the appearance of the man of sin. The appearance of the man of sin to which Paul points seems to be the point at which he is revealed for who he really is, that is, at the mid point of the tribulation period. Thus, the Day of the Lord to which Paul refers may well be the second half, the most devastating part of Daniel's seventieth week. The reason for the delay of the man of sin's appearance is the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit, which, one day will cease. At that point, lawlessness will be unrestrained and many will be deceived by his lie.
- 1D PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS 2:13-17
After discussing the man of sin and his deception of many, Paul thanks God that the Thessalonian believers have been chosen by God. The thought seems to be that although much of the world will be deceived, these, the elect, will not. They may have been temporarily confused but will ultimately know the truth about the Messiah and his adversary, the man of sin. Paul then prays for their encouragement.
- 1E EXHORTATIONS IN PRACTICAL MATTERS 3:1-15
Although Paul has given teaching in the first two chapters this is the first instance of his normal style of exhorting his recipients. He first requests prayer, expresses confidence and then addresses the problem of people not working, a situation hinted at in the first letter (4:11-12).
- 1B Request for Prayer for Paul and Company 3:1-2
Paul requests prayer for his missionary endeavors. Again, the Thessalonians serve as models for Paul's efforts. He would like to have more responses to the gospel as he had in Thessalonica.
- 2B Expression of Confidence in God's working in Them 3:3-5
Paul is confident that the work begun by God will be continued in them. The character qualities which Paul prays for in the Thessalonians are those which he has emphasized before, love for brothers and perseverance in trials.
- 3B Disciplining of the Disorderly 3:6-15
The problem of those who would not work may have been hinted at in the first letter (4:11-12) and seems to have degenerated to the point where Paul deems it worthy of some kind of corporate censure. His counsel is to withdraw from the erring ones so that they will be ashamed and come to their senses.
- 1F CONCLUSION, GREETING AND BENEDICTION 3:16-18
Paul signs the greeting with his own hand, a distinguishing mark of the apostle. Paul's closing concern for his people is peace.

