

2 THESSALONIANS

Main Theme: Eschatology (The Lord Comes to Establish His Kingdom - The Second Coming)

Primary Reference Source: The McArthur Study Bible

Background: Both 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians have eschatology as the main theme. Eschatology is the branch of theological study which addresses the end of this world order and the establishment of the Kingdom of God as taught through scripture.

Paul's epistles, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, were written to the church in Thessalonica. Eschatology dominates this epistle because serious misunderstandings had been generated by the false teachers about the coming Day of the Lord. Paul had maintained correspondence with the Thessalonian church so he knew that the false teachers were having an impact in this church and the people were behaving disorderly.

Overview of the Text: Paul's epistle of 2 Thessalonians is divided into three parts, which comprises, offering comfort for those persecuted for the faith (2 Thessalonians 1:3-12), correction of false teaching which frightened many believers (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5), and confronting disobedient and undisciplined believers (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

SCRIPTURE VERSES AND SCRIPTURE TEXT FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION BIBLE IN BOLD

2 Thessalonians Chapter 1

1. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul greets the Thessalonian church with his companions Silvanus and Timothy. Silvanus, also called Silas, accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15-18), and later functioned as a writer for Peter (1 Peter 5:12). Timothy was Paul's most notable disciple, accompanying him on his second and third missionary journeys, and remaining close to Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, and Philemon 1). Paul refers to the Thessalonian church as being in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This statement emphasizes the equality between God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

2. Grace to you and peace form God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:2 Paul opens his letter by expressing his gratitude to God for the Thessalonian believers. This gratitude energizes his prayers to God for these saints.

3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,

4. so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

5. which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5 Paul was thankful for the Thessalonian church for the following reasons:

1. Their faith was growing because they were steadfast in studying scripture.
2. The love that the Thessalonians had for one another is manifest for all to see.
3. The Thessalonians' trust in the Lord was evident through their patience and faith in all persecutions and tribulations. Paul wanted to boast about this to all the churches. Paul concludes by stating the Thessalonians' patience and faith demonstrates trust in the righteous judgment of God and evidences their worthiness for the Kingdom of God.

- 6. since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,**
- 7. and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,**

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 “Just as the righteous judgment of God works to perfect believers, so it works to repay the wicked. Vindication and retribution are to be exercised by God, not man, in matters of spiritual persecution (Deuteronomy 32:35, Proverbs 25:21-22, Romans 12:19-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:15, and Revelation 19:2).” Since God is holy, it is righteous for him to judge sin. Christ coming as Judge is revealed in two phases. The first phase of Christ coming as Judge is at the end of the seven year tribulation period (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43; 24:29-51; 25:31-46; Revelation 19:11-15). The second phase, the final and universal revelation of Christ as Judge, occurs at the Great White Throne judgment following Christ’s millennial reign on the earth (Revelation 20:11-15).

8. in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 “Fire is a symbol of judgment (Exodus 3:2, 19:16-20, Deuteronomy 5:4, Psalm 104:4, Isaiah 66:15-16, Matthew 3:11-12, Revelation 19:12).” Retribution comes upon those who do not know God, because they did not obey God’s command to believe the gospel, which includes calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved from their sin. “Salvation is never obtained by works but always by placing one’s faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-10).

9. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

2 Thessalonians 1:9 Those who are unbelieving will enter a new state of consciousness which is significantly worse than the first. This state of consciousness is in eternal hell. Hell is best described as the absence of God’s presence and glory.

10. when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:10 When Christ comes to establish His millennial kingdom, He comes with His church (Revelation 19:11-14). “This is the glorious manifestation of believers of which Paul spoke (Romans 8:18-19).” At the time of Christ’s return, all believers will adore and worship Him, including those in the Thessalonian church who believed Paul’s testimony of the gospel.

11. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,

2 Thessalonians 1:11 Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians was that they would conduct themselves in a way that is counted worthy by God, and that as they work out their faith the power of God would be made manifest.

12. that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:12 “The worthy walk of verse 11 allows God to be glorified in us, the light of all purposes.” (1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Peter 4:11)

2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

- 1. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,**
- 2. not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.**

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 Paul addresses the false teaching that was troubling the Thessalonian church. This false teaching proclaimed that the day of Christ had already come. The false teachers probably cited the persecutions they were enduring as evidence that they were in the era of the great tribulation. Paul must have taught them that they would miss the Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:2-5, Revelation 3:10), but they had become confused by the false message that the current persecutions they were experiencing demonstrated that they were in the Day of the Lord. The false message that the church was in the Day of the Lord judgment was falsely attributed to Paul, which gave this lie apostolic sanction.

- 3. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,**

2 Thessalonians 2:3 “The language indicates a specific event, not general apostasy which exists now and always will. “Paul has in mind the falling away or the apostasy. This is a unique, consummate, and final act of rebellion. The main person involved in this rebellion (falling away) is the man of sin, better known as the Antichrist. “The falling away is the abomination of desolation that takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation, spoken of in Daniel 9:27, 11:31 and Matthew 24:15.” Paul is referring to the very act of ultimate apostasy which reveals the final Antichrist and sets the course for the events that usher in the Day of the Lord.”

- 4. who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

2 Thessalonians 2:4 The Antichrist exalts himself and opposes God by moving into the temple, the place of worship of God, declaring himself to be God and demanding the worship of the world. “In this act of Satanic self-deification, he commits the great apostasy in defiance of God. For the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, he maintains relations with Israel, but halts those (Daniel 9:27); and for the last 3 ½ years, there is great tribulation under his reign (Daniel 7:25, 11:36-39, Matthew 24:15-21, Revelation 13:1-8) culminating with the Day of the Lord.”

- 5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?**

2 Thessalonians 2:5 “Apparently, Paul on numerous occasions had taught them the details of God’s future plans. Here he reminded them of the issues which proved the false teachers wrong about the Day of the Lord. Paul had before told them that the revealing of the Antichrist preceded the Day of the Lord; since he has not yet been revealed they could not possibly be in that Day.”

6. And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

2 Thessalonians 2:6 “While the Thessalonians already had been taught and thus knew what was restraining the coming of the Antichrist, Paul does not say specifically in this letter; thus many suggestions have been made to identify the restraining force of verses 6 and 7.” “It is God’s power in operation that holds back Satan, so that the man of sin, the son of destruction, won’t be able to come until God permits it by removing the restraining power. The reason for the restraint was so that Antichrist would be revealed at God’s appointed time and no sooner, just as was Christ (Galatians 4:4), because God controls Satan.”

7. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 “At the divinely decreed moment in the middle of the Tribulation when God removes the divine restraint, Satan, who has been promoting the spirit of lawlessness (Verse 7), is finally allowed to fulfill his desire to imitate God by indwelling a man who will perform his will as Jesus did God’s.” Death for the Antichrist and the false prophet occurs directly by God’s hand, when He casts them alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (Revelation 19:20, 20:10). On that day the Lord will come in judgment to conquer the forces of Satan and set up His millennial kingdom (Revelation 19:11-21).

9. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10. and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 The Antichrist will do mighty acts pointing to himself as supernaturally empowered. “His whole operation will be deceptive, luring the world to worship him and be damned.” “His influence is limited to deceiving the unsaved, who will believe his lies (Matthew 24:24).”

11. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

2 Thessalonians 2:11 “People who prefer to love sin and lies rather than gospel truth will receive severe, divine recompense, as do all sinners. God will use Satan and Antichrist as His instruments of judgment. Antichrist and false prophet will be a delusional influence upon the unbelieving world so that they continue to believe what is false.

12. that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Thessalonians 2:12 “As God has always judged willful rejection by giving men over to impurity and degrading passions (Romans 1:24-28), so in the last days God will sovereignly seal the fate of those who persist in following Satan and his counterfeit Christ. As in all ages, those who habitually reject the truth are judged by being left to the consequences of their sins.”

SUMMARY:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 “This is the spirit of lawlessness already prevalent in society (1 John 3:4; 5:17), but still a mystery in that it is not fully revealed as it will be in the one who so blatantly opposes God that he blasphemously assumes the place of God on earth which God has reserved for Jesus Christ. The spirit of such a man is already in operation (1 John 2:18; 4:3), but the man who fully embodies that spirit has not come.” The restraint discussed in verse 6 will be in place until the Antichrist is revealed, at the midpoint of the Tribulation, leaving him 42 months to reign. (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:5)

13. But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

14. to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 Paul notes three characteristics of believers:

1. “...God from the beginning chose you for salvation...” – God chose us for salvation from eternity past.
2. “...through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...” – Believers are set apart from sin by the Spirit.
3. “...for obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ...” – Believers are called to eternal glory with Jesus Christ. This means to share the very glory of the Lord Jesus.

15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to hold fast to what he has taught them. This is a sure guard against false teaching and error.

16. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,

17. comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 In this benediction Paul invoked God's power, based on His love and grace, as the true source of encouragement and strength. Since believers are predestined for eternal glory with the Lord, the Thessalonians had an everlasting consolation and good hope which is by grace. This puts the believer at ease in his spirit and establishes him for every good work.

2 Thessalonians Chapter 3

1. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,

2 Thessalonians 3:1 Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and his partners in ministry in order that the word of God would work effectively with others just as it had worked effectively for the Thessalonian church.

2. and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

2 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul also requested prayer for deliverance from unreasonable and wicked men. Such men were in Corinth (Acts 18:9-17) where Paul ministered and where he wrote this epistle.

3. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 The Lord is faithful. He will establish His servants in every good work and protect them from Satan.

4. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

2 Thessalonians 3:4 Paul had confidence in the Lord to establish the Thessalonian believers in a faithful Christian walk.

5. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 Paul provided a parting benediction to the Thessalonian believers to love God and show love for one another by bearing with one another. This benediction is given in the form of a prayer that the Lord would make this happen.

6. But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 “Paul’s directions were not mere suggestions but rather they carried the weight and authority of a judges’ court order which the apostle delivered and enforced.” “Paul’s traditions were the inspired teachings he had given.” Here, Paul required obedient Christians to separate from or not to fellowship with habitually disobedient believers.

7. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

2 Thessalonians 3:7 A disorderly or disobedient Christian is diametrically opposed to the example that Paul desired to establish as he followed Christ. Paul notes that he and his co-laborers did not act disobediently among the Thessalonians.

8. nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

9. not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

2 Thessalonians 3:8-10 The disobedience Paul is specifically addressing is disclosed in verses 8-10. Apparently there were believers who did not work and were taking advantage of the church. Paul points out that if anyone had the right not to work it was him, since he is an apostle and he deserves support. Paul instead chose to earn his own living and set an example.

11. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

12. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 “Word had come that, in spite of Paul teaching them to work and writing to them about it (1 Thessalonians 4:11), some were still not willing to work. These were commanded to settle down and begin an ordered life of work.”

13. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.

2 Thessalonians 3:13 “The hard working believers were tired of having to support the lazy, and were ready to stop all help to those in need, giving up all charity. Paul reminded them that the truly needy still required help and that the Thessalonians must not be negligent toward them.”

14. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 Those who refuse to work were to be avoided. Such believers show themselves as disqualified by their deviant behavior.

15. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 Thessalonians 3:15 Such avoidance was not final rejection, but an admonishment to conduct one's affairs rightly.

16. Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 3:16 In closing his epistle, Paul commends the Thessalonian brethren to receive the peace from the Lord who is the Lord of peace.

17. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

2 Thessalonians 3:17 "Paul often wrote through a secretary (Romans 6:22). When that was the case, as most likely with this letter, Paul added an identifying signature (1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18) so that readers could be sure he was truly the author."

18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 3:18 Paul's parting statement is a commendation of the Thessalonian believers to the grace of God.