

PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS



The Catacombs of St. John the Baptist in Thessalonica, part of a network of subterranean passageways within the city. The severe persecution of Christians ordered by Emperor Diocletian in early AD 303 affected Thessalonica in 304. Christians hid, gathered for worship, and buried their dead in catacombs like this.

INTRODUCTION

Note: it is important to remember that the original epistles were not titled nor where they numbered.

“Following up on his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote to give further clarification on how to live the Christian life in light of the return of Christ. The Thessalonians were called to stand firm and live useful lives, because the return of Christ might be in the distant future.”¹

Second Thessalonians, the fourteenth book in the New Testament is a continuation of Paul’s first epistle. Both letters share the same background.

History

For a historical view of Thessalonica, please See the “Introduction, History” on “Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians” by 73Twenty Ministries @ 73Twenty.com.

The Church

For a view of Thessalonian church, please See the “Introduction, Church” on “Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians” by 73Twenty Ministries @ 73Twenty.com.

¹ James F. Davis, “2 Thessalonians,” in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1909.

Survey of the New Testament

There is much discussion on the location that this second epistle was written. Some suggest that it was written at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21) however, as Paul stayed appraised of the church, this epistle was probably written in Corinth after receiving a second report (Acts 18:11).

It is clear upon reading this second letter that the church in Thessalonica had taken Paul's first letter to heart and was maturing in their faith. That would also mean that they were taking the Great Commission to heart and were growing. The reaction from the world was greater pressure and persecution.

AUTHOR

There is very little argument that Second Thessalonians was penned at Corinth by the apostle Paul. Paul again mentions Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus (Timothy) in the introduction as senders of the epistle (1Th 1:1).

Paul declares himself the writer in the first verse of the epistle (2Th 1:1). It is very interesting that the greeting in both letters has so much in common.

1Th 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2Th 1:1-2 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

DATE

The postscript of 2 Thessalonians says the epistle "was written from Athens." (2Th 3:18).

This epistle appears to have been written shortly after Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. Paul receives a report that the Thessalonians had accepted that the "day of the Lord has come."

2Th 2:1-2 Now we beseech you, brethren, ably the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

It is generally considered that Paul sent this letter between 49-52 AD and probably from Corinth. However, Paul does not give any dates or historical point in which the date can be determined.

AUDIENCE

Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1Th 1:1)

THEME

"Persecution (1:4-12; 3:1-5). Knowing that believers were being persecuted for their faith, Paul encouraged the church to persevere despite their troubles and trials. He affirmed that God would bring victory to his faithful followers and judge those who persecute them.

Christ's return (1:5-7; 2:1-12). Because Paul had written that Christ could return at any moment, some of the Thessalonian believers had stopped working in order to wait for him. Certainly, believers should be prepared for the Second Coming. But this preparation includes faithfully fulfilling the work to which God has called them, living upright and moral lives, and using their gifts and talents for God's glory.

Great rebellion (2:3–12). Before Christ’s return, a great rebellion against God will be led by the man of lawlessness (the Antichrist). God will remove all the restraints on evil before he brings judgment on the rebels. The Antichrist will attempt to deceive many.

Persistence (1:4, 11–12; 2:13–17; 3:1–15). Members of the Thessalonian church had quit working and had become disorderly and disobedient. Paul chastised them for their idleness. He called them to show courage and true Christian conduct. He also challenged them to pray for courage and for each other and to stand firm in their faith.”²

PURPOSE AND CONTENT

Warren Wiersbe

“The Christians in Thessalonica were grateful to God for Paul’s first letter, but it did not immediately solve all their problems. In fact, the persecution grew worse and some believers thought they were living in the time of the Tribulation. Then a letter arrived claiming to be from Paul, stating that the Day of the Lord was actually present. Needless to say, the assembly was confused and frightened by this prospect.

Some of the believers concluded that since the Lord’s coming was so near, they ought to quit their jobs and spend their time waiting for Him. This meant that the other members were under an extra burden to care for them. Satan was working overtime; as the lion, he was seeking to devour (1 Peter 5:7–8), and as the serpent, he was seeking to deceive (2 Cor. 11:3).

It was in response to these needs that Paul wrote his second letter. He began with their most pressing need, the persecution they were experiencing because of their faith. In this first chapter, Paul shared three encouragements with his suffering friends.”³

The ESV Transformation Study Bible

“Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians is a letter of comfort to those eagerly awaiting the promised return of Jesus Christ. Since receiving Paul’s first letter the Thessalonian faith in Christ and their love for one another had continued to grow abundantly while they endured affliction for the sake of the gospel. Paul writes to encourage them to remain steadfast in their commitment to the gospel and the doctrine that they had learned from the apostles. False prophets had been spreading rumors suggesting that the day of the Lord had already come.” (2Th 2:2 ff, 2Th 1:10) and Paul writes to set the record straight by providing further details about the events surrounding the second coming of Christ.

Paul also deals with misbehavior that has been a consequence of the Thessalonians’ misunderstanding. While awaiting the coming day of the Lord, some of the believers at Thessalonica had become unwilling to work. Paul urges to believers to continue to work and not to grow weary in doing good while waiting in hope for God’s impending vengeance against the wicked and his salvation of his chosen people. Just as God called us through the gospel, so he is faithful to his promise to guard us and establish us in every good work until Jesus returns.”⁴

² Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, *1 & 2 Thessalonians: Life Application Commentary*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 105–106.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 192.

⁴ *The ESV Transformation Study Bible*, 2013, (Wheaton, IL, Crossway) 1793

KEY THOUGHT/CENTRAL MESSAGE

- Staying steadfast amid persecution (2Th 1:1-5)
- Discussing the Mystery and the Man of Lawlessness and the second coming of Christ.
- Strive to live and work diligently considering the Great Commission and the soon coming of Jesus Christ.

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

2 Thessalonians	Old Testament
2Th 1:5	Ex 23:22; Joel 3:4, 7
2Th 1:8	Is 66:15, 16
2Th 1:9	Is 2:10, 19, 21
2Th 1:10	Ps 89:71; Is 49:3
2Th 1:12	Is 66:5
2Th 2:3	Dan 7:25; 8:25; 11:36
2Th 2:4	Is 14:14; Ezek 28:2
2Th 2:8	Dan 7:10, 11; Is 11:4
2Th 2:11	1King 22:22; Ezek 14:9
2Th 2:13	Deut 33:12
2Th 3:1	Ps 147:15
2Th 3:2	Deut 32:20
2Th 3:10	Gen 3:19
2Th 3:15	Lev 19:17
2Th 3:16	Num 6:26; Ruth 2:4

THE KEYS

Key Verse/s

2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

2Th 2:14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Key Word/s & Phrases

Brethren (7x)	2Th 1:3; 2:1, 13, 15; 3:1, 6, 13
Coming (3x)	2Th 2:1, 8, 9
Disorderly (4x)	2 Th 3:6, 7, 11
God (19x)	2Th 1:1-6, 8, 11-12; 2:4, 11, 13, 16; 3:5
Lord (21x)	2Th 1:1-2, 7-9, 12; 2:1, 8, 13-14, 16; 3:1, 3-6, 12, 16, 18
Jesus Christ (11x)	2Th 1:1-2, 8, 12; 2:1, 14, 16; 3:6, 12, 18
Faith (4x)	2Th 1:3-4, 11; 3:2
Glorified (3x)	2Th 1:10, 12; 3:1

Survey of the New Testament

Grace (4x) 2Th 1:2, 12; 2:16; 3:18
Truth (3x) 2Th 20, 12, 13

OUTLINE

SALUTATION, 1:1, 2.

1. *The Integrity of the Faith and Life of the Thessalonians*, 1:3–12.
2. *The Man of Sin and the Coming of Christ*, 2:1–12.
3. *Prayer for the Thessalonians*, 2:13–17.
4. *A Request for the Prayers of the Thessalonians*, 3:1–5.
5. *The Christian's Manner of Life*, 3:6–15.

CONCLUSION, 3:16, 17.⁵

⁵ F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible Day by Day: A Devotional Commentary*, vol. 7 (Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1914–1918), 49.