

# The Second Letter to the Saints at Thessalonica

## Southside church of Christ, Huntsville

Reading Assignment—2 Thessalonians 1-3

### Introduction

After writing to the Thessalonians the first time, Paul apparently felt the need to follow up. Paul writes this second epistle with some of the same content, but more focused on specific subjects. He revisits the subjects of persecution and retaliation, the second coming, and working.

In chapter 1, Paul takes the time to address those who feel persecuted. He describes how God will provide reparation for what evil men do to believers. When Christ comes again he will take revenge on those who have not obeyed the gospel and, by implication, those who persecute Christians. Those who stand fast despite persecution will be counted worthy of the calling. Ultimately Christ's name will be glorified along with the believers.

Chapter 2 resumes the discussion of the second coming. Whether by misunderstanding or misinformation, the Thessalonians came to believe that the second coming was only moments away. Paul speaks about the second coming as if it is imminent and coming soon, but he also points out that it's not guaranteed to happen right this second. A falling away will occur first. A "man of sin" or "son of perdition" will be manifest before Christ comes again. Paul doesn't call this person the antichrist, but many of the same characteristics apply. John speaks of a similar type of person being revealed. John speaks of an antichrist and then says that there will be many antichrists. These many antichrists will deny the truth (1 Jn. 4:3). The fact that the antichrists become manifest proves it is the last time (see 1 Jn. 2:18-19). This sounds very similar to what Paul writes to the Thessalonians. Christ warns of this in Matthew 24:5, 24. Many will come claiming to have the power of Christ. Christ describes how some of the elect will be deceived by the great signs and wonders. In reality, it will be the working of Satan (2 Th. 2:9).

It's not entirely clear if Paul is referring to the same persons as were Christ and John. Many of the descriptions fit many false teachers. Elsewhere Paul talks about the sons of wrath and disobedience (see Ep. 2:3; 5:6; Co. 3:6). Because he speaks of these as already present, it is unlikely he is speaking of those persons. Interestingly, the description in 2 Thessalonians 2 seems to fit the leader of the Catholic Church. Consider the fact that the Pope is the mouth of Christ who can speak with the authority to make doctrine (2 Th. 2:4) and he (and other members of the Catholic Church) may be able to perform miracles (2 Th. 2:9). Of course, this description could apply to leaders of other groups as well. Whomever Paul is referring to, they had not come at the time of Paul's writing. Christ will not come until that son of perdition is revealed.

In chapter 3 Paul revisits the idea of working for a living. Along with the idea of working, he introduces the idea of church discipline. A man should work and provide for himself if he is

able. To do otherwise is living disorderly. Likewise, being a busybody is condemned. Those who behave either way should be publicly separated from the rest of the church. The purpose of having no company with that individual is to cause them to regret what they are doing. Even still we should not turn bitter toward such a one, but should still count them as a brother.

### **Instructions**

While reading chapters 1, 2, and 3, be sure to identify the major and minor themes as well as the major arguments used to support the themes.

#### **Chapter 1**

Major Theme:

#### **Chapter 2**

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

Minor Themes:

#### **Chapter 3**

Major Theme:

Major Argument:

Minor Themes:

### **Questions**

1. Those that will be punished will be separated from what? (2 Th. 1:9)

2. How are we to work? (2 Th. 3:12)

3. What caused the brethren to be “shaken in mind” and “troubled?”

4. What will happen before Christ comes again?

5. A man must \_\_\_\_\_ to eat.

6. In what were the Thessalonians to stand fast?

7. How did Paul have confidence in the Thessalonians?

**True or False**—Be sure to provide scripture for your answer.

T or F—Paul had never told them these things before.

T or F—Paul prayed to be delivered from wicked men.

T or F—Paul freely enjoyed their hospitality while in Thessalonica.

T or F—Some do not have the love of the truth.

T or F—The Thessalonians didn't have to worry about persecution.

**Thought Questions**

1. How does God send a strong delusion? (2 Th. 2:11-12)

2. What does Paul mean by “withdraw yourselves” in 2 Th. 3:6?