

Aquifer Open Study Notes (Book Intros)

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This resource has been adapted into multiple languages, including English, Tok Pisin, Arabic (عربي), French (Français), Hindi (हिंदी), Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Portuguese (Português), Russian (Русский), Spanish (Español), Swahili (Kiswahili), and Simplified Chinese (简体中文).

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2 Thessalonians

The Christians in Thessalonica had encountered persecution for their faith since converting. But now it was more severe. A false teaching claimed that the Day of the Lord had already come. Some Christians even stopped working. What do you say to people whose lives go from bad to worse? The apostle Paul's second letter to this new church addresses their troubles.

Setting

Since they converted to Christianity, the Thessalonian Christians encountered suffering ([1 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [2:14](#)). Paul worried about whether they would remain Christians ([1 Thessalonians 3:5](#)). When Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, they remained strong in faith, love, and hope ([1 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [3:6–8](#)).

After Paul sent his first letter, the situation in the Thessalonian church became worse, and persecution against the faith increased. A false teaching claimed that the Day of the Lord had already arrived ([2:2](#)). Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians after hearing this news to help the church change its perspective ([2:2](#); [3:11](#)).

Summary

Second Thessalonians begins with a typical greeting (1:1-2). It quickly moves to giving thanks for the church's faith, love, and patient hope. They had become an example for other churches (1:3-4). Paul acknowledges their suffering and says God will judge those who persecute them and reward the Thessalonian Christians (1:5-10). Paul thanks God for this church and prays that God will continue to make them worthy of his calling (1:11-12). Despite their troubles, Paul remained confident in God's work among them.

Paul addresses the false teaching that "the Day of the Lord has already come" (2:1-2). He advises the church not to let anyone "deceive you in any way" (2:3). He describes events that will happen before Christ returns. This is when the church will gather to meet him (2:1-12).

First, there will be a rebellion against God (2:3). Then "the man of lawlessness" will appear, claiming to be God and demanding worship (2:3-4). Although Satan will empower him and he will trick many people, Jesus will ultimately destroy him (2:8-12).

Paul is sure that God chose and called the Thessalonian Christians. He urges them to stay strong in the faith (2:13-15). Paul ends his talk about the final events of history with a prayer for the church (2:16-17). He asks them to pray for him as he shares the gospel (3:1-2). His confidence in the church comes from seeing God's work in them (3:3-5).

In the closing section, Paul again addresses an issue from his first letter (3:6-18). Some Christians were not working, despite Paul's guidance and example. So, Paul urges the church to correct them (3:6-10). He also speaks directly to these idle members, telling them to start working (3:11-12).

He instructs the church to treat these idle members as Christians in error rather than enemies (3:14-15). He encourages the church to keep helping those truly in need (3:13). He ends the letter with prayers and a final greeting (3:16-18).

Author

Paul's name appears in the letter's opening ([1:1](#)). At the end, Paul adds a note in his own signature to confirm the letter is authentic ([3:17](#)). Like in 1 Thessalonians, Paul includes the names of Silas and Timothy, who helped found this church. This shows they supported the letter's content and probably helped write it.

Most first-person pronouns in the letter are plural ("we"). This indicates Silas and Timothy contributed to the letter, and Paul did not just add their names as a courtesy. However, the final greeting in Paul's signature emphasizes that he is the main author and personally responsible for the letter's content.

The early church agreed that 2 Thessalonians was the work of the apostle Paul. The letter matches Paul's other writings.

Recipients

Paul sent the letter to the same people as 1 Thessalonians: "the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" ([2 Thessalonians 1:1](#)). Many were skilled workers who earned a living by working with their hands or were clients of wealthy patrons. They were not wealthy themselves ([3:6-12](#)).

Meaning and Message

Wars often happen on multiple fronts. This was true for the conflict in the church at Thessalonica. Those people who persecuted Christians attacked the church, false teachings increased, and some members refused to work.

Despite these challenges, Paul did not allow despair or frustration to overcome him. He plainly taught and corrected. His words were intended to strengthen the troubled church. He wanted to stop the false teachings and correct those who were not behaving properly.

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians is valuable not just for understanding events at the end of time. Many focus on the second chapter for this reason. However, Second Thessalonians is mainly a pastor's letter from Paul. It offers hope and confidence in God during times of chaos. Christ rules now and will ultimately triumph.