



Walking Thru The Bible

2 THESSALONIANS

AUTHOR: The author of the book of Second Thessalonians is the Apostle Paul. It was written about AD 50 or AD 51 from Corinth just a short time after the dispatch of his **first epistle**.

BACKGROUND: For background on the city of Thessalonica see the study sheet "Walking Thru the Bible" on 1 Thessalonians.

Paul's interest and concern for the new Christians at Thessalonica did not end with the dispatch of his first letter to them. Paul's life was one that showed continued prayer and labor for those he had won to Christ.

The background of **2nd Thessalonians** is almost the same as that of his first epistle to them. Paul was still in Corinth and had received a report about the church's condition and their reception of his first letter. Through what channel the report came, and whether oral or written, we don't know, but its content prompted him to write 2 Thessalonians.

CONTENTS: 2 Thessalonians was apparently prompted by three main developments:

- 1) The persecution of the Christians there had grown worse and was leaving some at the point of despair.
- 2) A letter and other representations *fraudulently* claiming to be from Paul were on the verge of convincing the Christians there that the end-time was already present and Christ's return was imminent as evidenced by their suffering.
- 3) The nearness of Christ's return had been misused as a basis for shirking vocational responsibility even more than at the time of 1 Thessalonians. This problem had become quite severe.

DATE: The letter was written during Paul's stay in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Paul, Silas and Timothy were all together and this combination is unknown to us after this time. The date of the letter is just a few months after First Thessalonians in AD 50 or 51.

PURPOSE: To meet the needs that prompted the Epistle Paul pursued three broad purposes:

- 1) He provides an incentive for the Thessalonians to persevere a little longer by describing the reward and retribution that God would

be handing out to their persecutors in the coming judgment.

- 2) Paul wants to make clear that they understand that certain things must happen first before the "Day of the Lord" came and thus to prove false the claims that the "day" had already arrived (2:1-12).

- 3) Paul issues detailed instructions covering disciplinary steps the church should take in correcting those who refuse to work (3:6-15).

INTERPRETATION PROBLEMS:

It is obvious that in his first epistle that the subject under consideration in chapter 4 is the day of the Lord's return and the resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Apparently a "forged" letter claiming to be from Paul was circulating among them and caused confusion (2 Thess. 2:2-3). Some were speculating that the time of Christ's return was imminent and were connecting it with the day of God's judgment upon their enemies (the coming fall of Jerusalem in AD 70).

The term "Day of the Lord" was used among the prophets of the Old Testament to refer to a judgment from God where God's people would be vindicated and their enemies punished. It was reference to historical events such as the fall of cities and nations to their enemies. These events were "types" of the final judgment of the Lord which will take place at the return of Christ and the resurrection of all from their graves.

Paul uses the term "the day of the Lord" in his first epistle (1 Thess 5:2) in the chapter following his discussion of the second coming. In the second epistle he speaks of "the day of Christ" (2:2 "day of the Lord" ASV) saying that some were mistaken thinking "the day" was "at hand" and didn't want them to be deceived.

Neither the "day of the Lord" as a day of judgment upon the Jews for the rejection of Christ (AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the nation, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21); nor the second coming of Christ with the resurrection were at hand.

Paul then in 2 Thessalonians 2 gives some events that must be fulfilled before "the day of the Lord." The interpretation problem is this: what is the fulfillment of these events of 1) apostasy; 2) and "the man of sin"? Notice these two possibilities:

I. Refers to events before the judgment of AD 70.

In this understanding the "apostasy" would be that caused by the Judaistic false-teachers that entrapped Christians again into the keeping of the Law of Moses. The book of Hebrews and Galatians especially deal with this problem as do many of Paul's later epistles.

"Traditions"

2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6

The identity of the "man of sin:"

A. This could be a reference to Nero who "deified" himself and had incense burned before his image in the temples. In the fifth year of his reign Nero murdered the famous Roman teacher and philosopher Seneca who was his tutor and chief adviser and a restraining influence in his life (2:7). Nero became a severe persecutor of Christians putting to death Paul and Peter.

B. It could possibly even be the Jewish priestly hierarchy which defied God's revelation and undertook to stifle God's Word and enforce its own traditions on all Jews.

A strong argument for one of these interpretation is Paul's statement in 2:7 that this "mystery of iniquity" was already at work.

II. Refers to events fulfilled by the Papacy before second coming.

This interpretation views the "apostasy" as Catholicism and the "man of sin" to be the Pope who made himself the vicar of Christ on earth. Many have held to this view especially since the time of the Protestant Reformation.

III. Refers to some yet unfulfilled event before second coming.

This interpretation looks for a greater "apostasy" to occur in the "Christian" faith in the future than has yet arrived on the scene. "The man of sin" is often equated with the "Anti-Christ" that John spoke of in I John 2:18 (written in the AD 60's, of whom John said there were "many" and "even now" existing).

OUTLINE OF SECOND THESSALONIANS

- I. Paul deals with some personal matters: 1:1-12
 - A. Paul extends a brief salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Paul's thanksgiving over their spiritual progress 1:3-4
 - C. Encourages continued faithfulness amid suffering 1:5-10
 - D. Prays for God to strengthen their lives 1:11-12
- II. Concerning the Day of the Lord: 2:1-17
 - A. Paul disclaims teaching that the Lord's coming is imminent 2:1-2. The Lord's coming nor the Day of the Lord will come till:
 - B. An apostasy ("rebellion") ensues 2:3
 - C. The man of sin be revealed 2:3-12
- III. Paul's appeals to them 2:13 - 3:15
 - A. Paul appeals for their firmness in the faith 2:13-17.
 - B. He appeals for their prayers 3:1-5.
 - C. He appeals for discipline toward those walking disorderly 3:6-15
- IV. Concluding benediction and greeting 3:16-18

Introduction:

1. Paradosis is the Greek word translated "tradition." It is defined as that which is given over or handed down by word of mouth or in writing, and can refer to the substance of teaching from whatever source, including the Divine (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Cor. 11:2). This is the sense in which it is used in our text.
2. "Traditions" as used in the sense of "traditions of men" are religious laws and regulations originating in the minds of men and handed down orally and/or in printing from generation to generation.

Jesus frequently denounced such traditions and warned disciples that following them makes the word of God "of none effect" (see Matthew 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13; Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18; Galatians 1:14).

I. Warning Against Walking Disorderly

- A. *"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies."* (2 Thessalonians 3:11)
- B. *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."* (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

II. Are we "Holding Fast" or Forsaking our Traditions?

- A. *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."* (2 Thessalonians 2:15)
- B. 2 Thessalonians 3:6. (See I, B, above)
- C. Carelessly following after sin.
- D. Deliberately "toying" with sin.

III. Following Christ the Apostles.

- A. The "tradition" of Christ and the Apostles.
- B. Walking orderly in the way of Christ and the Apostles.

Conclusion: