



2 Thessalonians



NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

J. Vernon McGee



2 Thessalonians

WRITER: Paul

DATE: A.D. 52-53 (The second epistle followed shortly after the first)

OCCASION: The first letter to the Thessalonians gave rise to further questions, and Paul is attempting to answer these. There was circulating in the Thessalonian church a letter or report, purported to have come from Paul, which was inclined to disturb the Christians. This false report claimed that Christ had already come and had already gathered out the church to Himself and that the world was then living in the judgments of the “day of the Lord.” Their present persecutions confirmed this false report. Paul attempts to allay their fears by stating definitely that “our gathering together unto him” is yet future (2 Thessalonians 2:1) and that “the day of the Lord” has certain forerunners which must first come. The apostasy and the “man of sin” must come first; the removal of the remnant of believers at “our gathering together unto him” makes the apostasy in the professing church 100% (Luke 18:8). Every era of persecution or trouble has given rise to the false impression that the church is going through the time of judgment which Christ identified as the “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21). This period has been so clearly identified by Christ that there is no rea-

son for getting panicky or being stampeded into an unwarranted position. Christ said that there is coming a small interval which will be blocked off by “such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). Nothing like it has taken place before, and nothing like it will ever take place afterward. Has there ever been such a period of unparalleled trouble? The answer is obvious.

THEME: The first epistle to the Thessalonians deals with the Rapture, Christ’s coming for believers. The second epistle relates the return of Christ to that phase where He returns to the earth in judgment and where one of the accomplishments is in connection with the “man of sin,” whom He “shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). These two aspects are clearly delineated. The interval between these two phases is the Great Tribulation, which can be further identified with the 70th week of Daniel 9 as a period of seven years.

THE DAY OF THE LORD: This is the phrase which occurs in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 (incorrectly translated “the day of Christ” in the Authorized Version). It is an Old Testament phrase with definite connotations. It occurs in the writings of the Old Testament prophets where it relates to the future kingdom promised in the Old Testament. The day of Christ is a New Testament expression (1 Corinthians 1:8); it relates here to the future of the church. The day of the Lord is connected with the coming of Christ as it relates to the setting up of the kingdom. The day of Christ is connected with the coming of Christ for the church. Whatever else is implied in these two statements, certainly this is basic. The teaching in 1 Thessalonians is that the saints who have died will have part in Christ’s coming for His living saints; in 2 Thessalonians it is that the saints who are alive will not have part in the Great Tribulation. The return of Christ has a peculiar and precious meaning for His saints.

OUTLINE:

- I. PERSECUTION of believers now; judgment of unbelievers hereafter (at coming of Christ), Chapter 1**
 - A. Introduction, vv. 1, 2
 - B. Persecution of believers and fruits of it, vv. 3-7
 - C. Judgment of wicked at coming of Christ, vv. 8-12
- II. PROGRAM for world in connection with coming of Christ, Chapter 2:1-12**
 - A. Rapture occurs first, v. 1
 - B. Day of the Lord follows; introduced by total apostasy and appearance of man of sin, vv. 2-5
 - C. Mystery of lawlessness working today; lawless one restrained by Holy Spirit, vv. 6-8
 - D. Lawless one to appear in Great Tribulation Period, vv. 9-12
- III. PRACTICALITY of coming of Christ, Chapters 2:13–3:18**
 - A. Believers should be established in the WORD, Chapter 2:13-17
 - B. Believers should be established in their WALK, Chapter 3:1-7
 - C. Believers should be established in their WORK, Chapter 3:8-18

COMMENT:

I. PERSECUTION of believers now; judgment of unbelievers hereafter (at coming of Christ), Chapter 1

A. Introduction, vv. 1, 2

The greeting is Paul's usual friendly greeting to a church that is spiritually sound.

B. Persecution of believers and fruits of it, vv. 3-7

V. 3-In the midst of severe persecution that the church in Thessalonica was enduring, they were growing and abounding, increasing in faith and love. Paul will encourage them in the hope of believers.

V. 4-The Thessalonian believers were an example to other churches in patience and faith. Persecution produced these fruits. "Tribulation [trouble] worketh patience" (Romans 5:3). See also Romans 12:12.

V. 5—See Romans 8:17; 2 Corinthians 4:8; 7:5.

V. 6—God is righteous in sending the Great Tribulation. It is a judgment of sinners.

V. 7—"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

C. Judgment of wicked at coming of Christ, vv. 8-12

V. 8—Very little is said in the Scriptures about the condition of the lost—nothing to satisfy a morbid curiosity or to incite revenge. Christ said more about hell than did anyone else. There is a restrained reticence in Scripture.

THE LOST ARE THOSE WHO:

1 - "Know not God." Jesus said,

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

2 - "Obey not the gospel."

Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6:29)

V. 9—Countless numbers of folk are plunging into an awful eternity. Soft music, colorful flowers, and eulogistic words cannot destroy the rough reality of hell.

V. 10—The coming of Christ to the earth in judgment will justify the believers and glorify the Savior.

V. 11—God had a purpose and plan in the lives of the Thessalonian believers.

V. 12—The coming of Christ to the earth will bring glory both to Christ and to the church.

II. PROGRAM for world in connection with coming of Christ, Chapter 2:1-12

A. Rapture occurs first, v. 1

V. 1—“The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “our gathering together unto him” is the Rapture.

B. Day of the Lord follows; introduced by total apostasy and appearance of man of sin, vv. 2-5

V. 2—“Day of Christ” (KJV) is an unfortunate translation—it should be “day of the Lord.” The “day of Christ” is this present age of grace, the church age (see 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16). “The day of the Lord” is a technical phrase that speaks of the period beginning with the Great Tribulation and continuing through the Millennium (see Acts 2:20; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 6:17).

The day of the Lord begins when the day of Christ ends.

The day of the Lord begins after the Rapture.

The Thessalonians had a false report (which supposedly had originated with Paul) that the day of the Lord had already come, which would have meant, of course, that they had missed the Rapture.

V. 3—Paul puts down two signs of the day of the Lord:

1 - “A falling away” which is apostasy (Hebrews 3:12)

2 - The revelation of the “man of sin” (the lawless one, v. 8)

The sin of man leads to the man of sin.

V. 4—The lawless one is the final representative of man in his open opposition and rebellion against God. He himself actually assumes the place of God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 13:5, 6, 15-18). This is the “little horn” of Daniel 7.

V. 5—Paul had taught the Thessalonian believers these eschatological truths in the brief interval covering 3 Sabbaths that he was with them.

C. Mystery of lawlessness working today; lawless one restrained by Holy Spirit, vv. 6-8

V. 6—The one who “restraineth” we believe to be the Holy Spirit.

V. 7—“Let” (KJV) means *hinder*. The Holy Spirit alone can hinder the development of evil since it is satanic and supernatural.

V. 8—“Wicked” is more accurately *lawless*. The lawless one will be revealed in the Great Tribulation. Christ will destroy him when He comes to the earth (Revelation 19:20).

D. Lawless one to appear in Great Tribulation Period, vv. 9-12

V. 9—The lawless one will be a miracle worker.

“Power” is *dunamis*—physical power whose source is supernatural.

“Signs”—tokens, the purpose of which is to appeal to the understanding.

“Lying wonders” produce an effect upon observers.

VV. 10, 11—God sends strong delusion to believe a lie only to those who heard but would not have the truth.

V. 12—These will be judged because they rejected the truth.

III. PRACTICALITY of coming of Christ, Chapters 2:13–3:18

In light of the knowledge of future events, the believer should live a life that demonstrates that he believes in the coming of Christ.

A. Believers should be established in the WORD, Chapter 2:13-17

VV. 13, 14—The total spectrum of salvation is in these two verses:

1 – “Chosen . . . to salvation”

2 – “Sanctification of the Spirit”

3 – “Belief of the truth”—growth is through the study of the Word

4 – “Glory” (Colossians 1:27)—this refers to the Rapture (1 John 3:2)

VV. 15-17—The Word enables a believer to stand and be stable. The Word brings consolation and comfort. The Word and work are interrelated. The study of the Word leads to the work of the Lord.

B. Believers should be established in their WALK, Chapter 3:1-7

V. 1-4—The Word enables the believer to walk before the wicked. The Word establishes a believer in his walk.

V. 5—The believer is to walk in the love of God and in a patient waiting for the coming of Christ.

V. 6—The believer is not to walk with the disorderly.

V. 7—The believer is to walk as a follower of the apostle.

C. Believers should be established in their WORK, Chapter 3:8-18

V. 8—Christian workers earned their own bread and paid their own way.

V. 9—They did this as an example to the believers in Thessalonica.

V. 10—A believer who is looking for the Lord to come is not a dreamer, but a worker. “No work—no food” is the rule laid down by the apostle.

V. 11—Some are working in the wrong way—they are busybodies.

V. 12—They are commanded to work for their own bread.

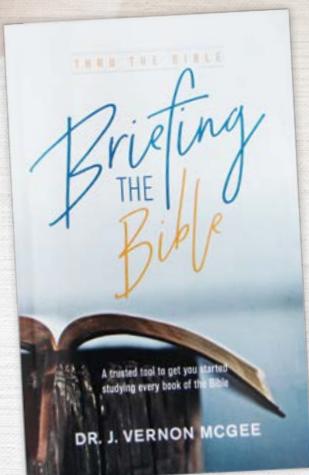
V. 13—A believer who holds the blessed hope should not grow weary in working for the Lord.

V. 14—A believer who holds the blessed hope is obedient to the Word. If he is not, he is to be avoided.

V. 15—An attempt should be made to win the wayward brother.

VV. 16-18—Paul’s benediction. The study of prophecy brings peace to the heart. It does not lead to fanaticism or laziness.

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