

## 2 THESSALONIANS

### 2 THESSALONIANS 1 — THE THANKSGIVING

This epistle was written by Paul soon after the previous one, and for a reason not very different. <sup><4470></sup>Acts 17 shows that Paul emphasized the second coming of Christ at Thessalonica, which is corroborated by <sup><5110></sup>1 Thessalonians 1:10. It grew out of this that the anxiety was felt touching the relation of the dead to the living saints at His coming, which was dealt with in <sup><5143></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:12. But another error arose from the same source which was fostered by the false teachers. These had even forged a letter in Paul's name, claiming that The Day of the Lord had already come, alarming many and leading them astray (<sup><5112></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). To meet this Paul writes this second letter, the chief interest in which begins at the "Thanksgiving" for their growing faith and abounding love (1:3). All this was in the midst of persecutions and afflictions endured because of that faith (v. 4), and was a token to them that God had counted them worthy of the kingdom of God which was to be set up when Christ came (v. 5). The church would be at rest with Christ in that "Day" when those who afflicted her would themselves be afflicted (vv. 6-7). But the "Day" Paul now has in mind does not synchronize precisely with the coming of the Lord for His church as taught in <sup><5143></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In other words, to rehearse what has been taught in other parts of this Commentary, the second coming of Christ is an act of two scenes. There is a "coming" for His church when the latter shall be caught up to meet him in the air, and then, after an interval, how long or short it is impossible to say, there is a "coming" or a "revelation" in judgment on the unbelieving and wicked nations of Christendom that are left behind. It is this latter aspect of the Second Coming that associated with judgment, which the Old Testament prophets are ever speaking of as "the Day of the Lord." They say nothing about His coming for His church, as indeed they say nothing about the church, but focus their attention upon the end of the age, when only Israel and the Gentile nations will be on the earth and the church shall have been taken away.

That Paul is speaking of this here is indicated in verses 7-10. The Lord Jesus will be "revealed from heaven with the angels of His power" (RV), "rendering vengeance." This shall take the form of "everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His power." This is not annihilation, it is well to observe, but conscious separation from him. And the time it will take place is "when he shall have come to be glorified in His saints" (v. 10). The Greek second aorist tense is used here, indicating that the event spoken of (the glorifying of Christ in His saints) shall have taken place. In other words, it is after the translation of the church, as we understand it, that "the Day of the Lord" is ushered in with all its attendant judgments.

The apostle closes his allusion to these matters with a prayer (vv. 11-12).

### QUESTIONS

1. What can you recite as to the occasion for this epistle?
2. What shows the boldness of the false teachers in this case?
3. For what does Paul thank God on behalf of the Thessalonian Christians?
4. Of what were their afflictions a token?
5. What can you recite about the second coming of Christ?
6. What do you understand by The Day of the Lord?
7. When will it be ushered in?

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2 — THE REVELATION OF THE MAN OF SIN

At this chapter we have the reference to the false teachers and their teaching. The first two verses should be read in the Revised Version which brings out the meaning clearer, for what the false teachers said was, that "the Day of the Lord is now present." Therefore what the apostle announces to take place before that "Day" comes, does not apply to the coming of Christ for his church, (an event which, so far as we know, may be very near), but the judgments that are to fall on the ungodly after the church has been taken away. Such is the significance of verses 3 and 4.

That which is to take place is

- (1) "a falling away," an apostasy in Christendom, and
- (2), the revelation of "the man of sin" (or lawlessness).

This "man of sin," who was foretold by Daniel, by Zechariah, and by Christ himself as we have seen, is described as opposing and exalting himself against "all that is called God," in the sense that he gives out that he himself is God, and men are ready to believe him. "The temple of God" (v. 4) as we have seen (~~2001~~ Daniel 9; ~~4001~~ Matthew 24), is the Jewish temple re-erected in Jerusalem, for the Jews are to return there, at first in an unconverted state so far as the acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah is concerned.

The apostle had informed the Thessalonians of these things when he was with them (v. 5), and furthermore that a restraining power was holding back the full development of this "man of sin" until his time came (v. 5). Just what this power is we are left to conjecture, but doubtless it is the Holy Spirit who dwells in the church. Imagine the church translated out of the earth, and the ascent of the Holy Spirit in *consequence*, and what restraining power would be left to hold back the hordes of wickedness in the earth, and prevent Satan from having his way in the full development of "the man of sin"? The doom of the latter is given in verse 8, and an added description follows in verses 9-10. Satan gives him his power, but he is able to deceive only those who "received not the love of the truth" (v. 10). The truth was revealed to them and rejected, for which reason that moral and spiritual weakness which made them a prey to the delusion, fell upon them as a divine judgment (vv. 11-12). There is a solemn warning here for those who are being tempted by Spiritualism, the New Age, Christian Science and kindred teaching.

It is a relief to turn to the apostle's address to the true believer in verses 13-15, and as we close the lesson let us for ourselves offer the prayer of verses 16-17.

## QUESTIONS

1. Have you read verses 1-2 in the Revised Version?
2. What did these false teachers teach?
3. To what event do verses 3-4 apply, in general terms?
4. What two things must transpire prior to The Day of the Lord?

5. What is intended here by "the temple of God"?
6. Who presumably, is holding back the full development of this apostasy?
7. What is the doom of "the man of sin"?
8. What class of people only will he be able to deceive?
9. What warning have we here?
10. Have you offered the prayer of verses 16-17?

## 2 THESSALONIANS 3 — CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter consists of an exhortation to pray for its author (vv. 1-2), an expression of his confidence in the faithfulness of those he is addressing (vv. 3-5); a command to them concerning their separation from the unfaithful (vv. 6-11); a command to the unfaithful themselves (vv. 12-15), a benediction and a superscription (vv. 16-18).

There is but one thing for which Paul would have them pray on his behalf, namely, that he may be "delivered from unreasonable and evil men."

These men were in the church in the visible sense, not the invisible, for they did not have "the faith" (RV) It was these more than the people outside who were hindering the Word from running and being glorified.

What a sweet thought that is in verse 5, "the patient waiting for Christ." It is only the scoffer, walking after his own lusts who says, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (~~GRB~~2 Peter 3:3-4). Let us not through any undue impatience be classed with them. He "will come and will not tarry" (~~SUB~~Hebrews 10:3, 7).

The unfaithful ones are the same as he addressed in ~~THO~~1 Thessalonians 4:10-12, and who evidently did not heed that exhortation. And yet, they might be saved men notwithstanding (see v. 15).

The token of validity (v. 17) is interesting in the light of 2:2. Hereafter the forger will have to be doubly bold.

No questions are required for this lesson.