**Simple Studies**

**in**

**Second Thessalonians**

**By**

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All Chapters are in Memory

**Introduction**

It is altogether to be regretted that because of a mistranslation in our common Version in the first three verses of the second chapter, the theme of Second Thessalonians should be confused. The Revisers have corrected it, but so few people consult the Revised Version that the correction is rarely seen. Instead of “the Day of Christ” in **2Th. 2:2**, it should read, “the Day of the Lord,” which is a very different matter. The Thessalonian Christians were disturbed by a report circulated among them, and evidently confirmed by a forged letter as from Paul, to the effect that the Day of the Lord had already begun, and that the afflictions which they were enduring were a part of the judgments relating to that “Day.” They had been taught by Paul that before “the Day of the Lord” could begin they should be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and that this catching up would be the beginning of “the Day of Christ.” Paul writes Second Thessalonians to comfort them and to explain that he has written no such letter to them, and that “the Day of the Lord” could not possibly begin while the church is still here upon the earth. “The Day of Christ” may begin at any time, for at any moment of any day or any night the Lord might descend from heaven to catch away his people. “The Day of Christ” begins with the rapture and endures for seven years, or the period of Daniel’s Seventieth Week (**Dan. 9:27**). During those seven years the church will be absent from the earth and with her Lord in heaven. At the end of that seven years the second coming of Christ to earth will take place, and that will be at the beginning of “the Day of the Lord.” This “Day of the Lord” will continue for the thousand years of our Lord’s millennial reign, and will then merge into “the Day of God,” when the kingdom is turned over to the Father, that God may be all in all (**1Cor. 15:22-28**; **2Peter 3:10-13**).

**II Thessalonians 1**

***I. The Salutation (1:1-4).***

1. “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (**2Th. 1:1-2**). This salutation is almost identical with that of First Thessalonians.

2. “We are bound to thank God always for you, 1 brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (**2Th. 1:3-4**). Of course the word “charity” in **2Th. 1:3** should read “love.” Here, as in First Thessalonians, Paul declares that he has occasion to tell the churches everywhere of the stedfastness and faithfulness of the Thessalonian Christians in all their sufferings.

***II. Present Suffering and Future Glory (1:5-12),***

1. “Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (**2Th. 1:5-8**). Here is a somewhat complicated passage. The glories of the coming kingdom are held before their eyes, and they are assured of the righteous judgment of God. The apostle declares that God is dealing righteously and that he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble them, and he will give rest to those who are troubled, when the Lord shall come in his glory, being “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some teachers hold that in this 8th verse we have two classes of people; first, “them that know not God”; and second, them “that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And from this they infer (for it is only an inference) that the first class consists of those who have never heard the gospel, and the second class consists of those who have heard it and disobeyed it before the rapture of the saints took place. Therefore they teach that those who hear and reject the gospel before the rapture will have no opportunity of salvation afterward.

For our own part we cannot see that the inference is warranted, and we do not believe that the Scriptures reveal here or elsewhere whether or not those who reject the gospel before the rapture will have opportunity for salvation afterward. What we do know is that salvation is offered here and now. It is not safe to wait. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

2. “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (**2Th. 1:9-10**). This is the judgment awaiting those “that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They are to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Destruction here does not mean annihilation, nor is the doctrine of annihilation taught here or elsewhere in Scripture. The Greek word is olethros, and the significance of the word is “ruin,” in the sense of death or punishment. Indeed, in the Revised Version the verse we are now studying is translated, “who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” Annihilation is quite a different thing from “destruction from the face of the Lord.”

All this is to take place when our Lord shall come to be glorified in his saints. What a joyous privilege will then be accorded to the saints, that in them their Lord shall be glorified! Then indeed shall they be an exhibit “to the praise of his glory” (**Eph. 1:12-14**). Also, in that day that is coming our Lord will be “admired in all them that believe.” The Revision reads, “and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.” That is the way it all comes about, through believing the testimony concerning him. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (**Rom. 10:17**).

3. “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you '\* worthy of this , calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (**2Th. 1:11-12**.) This then is the end of the race, the goal toward which we move. Then it will be our high privilege, without minus marks, to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (**1Peeter 2:9**).

**II Thessalonians 2**

***III. The Day of the Lord and the Son of Perdition (2:1-12).***

1. “Now we beseech you, brethren” (**2Th. 2:1-2**). As we have already seen, there is great need of observing the change made by the Revisers in the translation of this paragraph. Instead of “the day of Christ” in **2Th. 2:2**, we should read “the day of the Lord.” We quote from the Revised Version:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand.”

The apostle bases his exhortations upon “the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him,” which he had fully discussed in the fourth chapter of the First Epistle. He had there shown that the proper attitude of the believer is to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, ready always to be snatched away from this scene, and gathered about the pierced feet of the Lord in the air. Beginning now at the point where he left off then, the apostle cautions the Thessalonians against unnecessary agitation, and shows them that they should not be shaken or troubled either by spirit, or by word, or by a letter as from himself. He had written no such letter, though evidently they had received one in his name, saying that the Day of the Lord was about to begin.

There may be those who feel that we are overemphasizing the distinction between “the Day of Christ” and “the Day of the Lord.” They may say, Christ is the Lord, and the Lord is Christ, and Christ is both Lord and God; therefore it must be that “the Day of Christ,” “the Day of the Lord,” and “the Day of God,” are the same. That may sound logical, but it is entirely unscriptural. These are not matters of logic, but rather matters of revelation. And the Scripture clearly reveals that God makes a sharp distinction between these three periods called “Days.”

“The Day of Christ,” as we have already seen, is always imminent. It may begin at any moment of any day or any night, for it begins with the Rapture of the saved described in **1Th. 4:13-18**, and this may transpire at any time.

“The Day of the Lord” begins with the glorious second coming of Christ to the earth to set up the kingdom.

“The Day of God” begins at the end of the millennial reign of a thousand years, when the kingdom is turned over to the Father (**1Cor. 15:22-28**).

Thus we may see the importance of correct translation in **2Th. 2:2**. “The Day of Christ” is always at hand, but “the Day of the Lord” is not always at hand. As Paul says, it cannot take place until other things transpire which are predicted in the Word of God.

2. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first” (**2Th. 2:3**). More literally it would read, “the falling away.” The Greek word is apostasia and the meaning of it is, defection from truth. There have been many apostasies, each one of which could have been called “a falling away.” But the apostasy referred to here is different from the others, and so different and so much greater as to be designated “the falling away.”

3. “And that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (**2Th. 2:3**). This is the “Beast” of **Rev. 13:1-8**, who will be manifested as the emperor of the revived Roman empire. He and his False Prophet (**Rev. 13:11-17**) must be manifested before “the Day of the Lord” can begin.

4. “Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (setting himself forth as God, RV) (**2Th. 2:4**). This is what is referred to as “the abomination of desolation” (**Dan. 9:27; 12:11**; **Matt. 24:15**). It is the replacing of the worship of Jehovah by the worship of the “Beast.”

5. “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (**2Th. 2:5**.) From this we gather that during his brief visit to Thessalonica, which occupied less than a month (**Acts 17:1-2**), Paul not only preached the gospel to sinners, showing them the way of salvation, but he also dealt with a wide range of doctrine, including the things of prophecy. In these days we are advised on every hand not to deal with prophecy, and especially to avoid teaching prophecy to young converts. Young converts were all that Paul had at Thessalonica, and while he was yet with them he told them these things.

6. “And now ye know what withholds, that he might be revealed in his time” (**2Th. 2:6**). The Holy Spirit is now withholding or restraining the working of iniquity, so that “the man of sin” may not be revealed before his time.

7. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let” (**2Th. 2:7**). The Greek word for “letteth” is exactly the same as the Greek word for “withholds” in **2Th. 2:6**. In both instances the Revisers use the word, “restrains.” Here is an instance illustrating how the English language is changing through the centuries. We no longer use the word “let” in the sense of restraining, but only in the sense of permitting, which is exactly opposite.

8. “Until he be taken out of the way” (**2Th. 2:7**). This language has been misunderstood to indicate that the Holy Spirit will be taken away from the earth at the time of the Rapture. But notice the language. It does not say, “until he be taken away,” but rather, “until he be taken out of the way,” which is a very different matter. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, and therefore cannot be absolutely taken away from any place, but he may be “taken out of the way” as the restrainer of lawlessness, and that is exactly what will happen. He began, in the 2nd chapter of Acts, his work of gathering out from the nations a people for the Lord’s name (**Acts 15:13-18**). And in this ministry there must be of necessity a restraining of lawlessness. Therefore he is restraining lawlessness until the church is completed, and when that is done he will take his hands off, so to speak, and allow the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness to run its course without hindrance.

9. “And then shall that Wicked be revealed” (**2Th. 2:8-10**). Please observe that the word “Wicked” begins with a capital letter. It means “that wicked one,” or as the Revision puts it, “the lawless one,” the man of sin, the son of perdition. When the church has been completed, and together with the saints of past ages has been caught up “to meet the Lord in the air,” then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (RV). This is why men are lost. It is not because they are sinners, for salvation is offered only to sinners; it is rather because they refuse to receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

10. “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion” (**2Th. 2:11-12**). When men go on rejecting the truth, God turns them over to delusion, that they should believe, not “A LIE” as in the common Version, but “THE LIE”—“that they should believe THE LIE: that they all might be damned who believe not THE TRUTH, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” It is a choice between believing “THE TRUTH” and believing “THE LIE.” This may send us back to the beginning of things when God forbade Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He said to them, “Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eat thereof thou shalt surely die.” That was “THE TRUTH.” But Satan came saying, “Ye shall not surely die.” That was “THE LIE” (**Gen. 2:17; 3:4**). This TRUTH and this LIE have gone on ever since. THE TRUTH is that “the wages of sin is death,” and THE LIE is, “ye shall not surely die.”

In the lesson we are now studying we may find the secret as to why such large numbers of people are deceived by every new “ism” that comes into view. The reason is this: They have trifled so long with God and have so long refused to receive the love of THE TRUTH that they might be saved, that God has finally turned them over to believe THE LIE. Every false cult in the world comes with exactly the same message, “Ye shall not surely die.” They all deny the reality of eternal punishment, which is the worst possible form of death, and they all deny the value or even the need of salvation through blood. And the awful end of it all is that finally they come to have “pleasure in unrighteousness” (compare **Rom. 1:32**).

***IV. Exhortation to Steadfastness (2:13 to 3:5).***

1. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (**2Th. 2:13-14**). Many ancient authorities put the words, “as first fruits,” in place of the' words “from the beginning.” While Paul worked in Philippi before going to Thessalonica, yet the Thessalonians, together with the Philippians, might be designated as the first fruits of Macedonia. The apostle gives thanks that God hath chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Here again comes before us the mystery of election, and here the emphasis is upon the sovereignty of God in choosing these Thessalonians unto salvation. Elsewhere is emphasized the freedom and responsibility of man, and we are emphatically told that God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (**1Ti. 2:4** RV), and that he is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (**2Peter 3:9**). Let us all acknowledge that the relation between these two great doctrines of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility is beyond our finite comprehension, and let us adopt the philosophy of the old preacher who said, “I pray for my people as if everything depended upon God, and then I preach to my people as if everything depended upon themselves.” And let us rejoice that our calling of God is “to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (**2Th. 2:15**). In **Matt. 15:2-6** and **Mark 7:3-13** our Lord denounced the Jews for turning aside from the commandment of God to the traditions of men. In **Col. 2:8** Paul wrote: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” But the same Greek word is translated “ordinances” in **1Cor. 11:2** where Paul commends his readers because they have kept the ordinances as he delivered them unto them. Also, in the Epistle we are now studying, He rebukes those who walk disorderly “and not after the traditions which he received of us.” In itself, “traditions” is not an evil word. The thing to make sure of is that the traditions we follow are the traditions of God rather than those of men.

3. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (**2Th. 2:16-17**). A gracious benediction surely, breathing the apostle’s deep affection for these his children in the faith.

**II Thessalonians 3**

4. “Finally, brethren, pray for us” (**2Th. 3:1-2**). Definitely he desires them to pray for him, “that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.”

5. “For all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (**2Th. 3:2-3**). Paul was always depending upon the faithfulness of God. “If we are faithless, he abides faithful; for he cannot deny himself” (**2Tim. 2:13**, RV). Paul depended upon God to establish his children and to keep them from evil (or, the evil one, RV).

6. “And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you” (**2Th. 3:4**). Because of his confidence in the Lord he was looking for a real work among his people.

7. “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (**2Th. 3:5**). The Revision reads, “into the patience of Christ,” and the Revisers’ margin makes it, “into the stedfastness of Christ.”

***V. Final Instructions (3:6-18).***

1. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (**2Th. 3:6-10**). Because of the sufferings through which the Thessalonians were passing, and especially because they had been led to believe that the day of Christ had already come, leaving them behind at the rapture, and that they were just facing the terrors of the day of the Lord, there was danger that they should fail to do the things they ought to do. Paul points to his own conduct when he had been among them. He had not behaved disorderly, neither had he eaten any man’s bread for nothing, but had worked with his hands, that he might not be chargeable to any of them; not because he had not the authority, but to make himself an example unto his followers. And he says, “even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

2. "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly working not at all, but are busybodies” (**2Th. 3:11-13**). These he commands and exhorts by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread; and then addressing the whole group he says, “Brethren, be not weary in well doing.”

3. “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (**2Th. 3:14-15**). Here the apostle reminds them that he speaks with authority, and that his words, being the Word of God, must be obeyed.

4. “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (**2Th. 3:16-18**.) With this, the apostolic benediction, the Epistle closes.