

Bible Snapshots



2 Thessalonians – The Second Coming

Author – Paul, A.D. 53

- Name – see Snapshot on 1 Thess. This second book, written within a year of the first letter, is designed to answer some more questions about the coming of Christ. It seems as if they misunderstood the idea of him coming suddenly, thinking that meant he would return in the very near future in their lifetime (5:3). This error seems to have gained some speed due to false letters sent them (2:2; 3:17). He writes to reassure them that Christ will return to vindicate their cause (1:5-12); to explain that certain events must first come to pass before Christ's return (2:1-12); and to exhort them to lead a quiet, sober, and industrious life (3:6-15)
- The Thessalonian brethren were inclined to believe in an eminent coming of Christ because they were being heavily persecuted and perhaps they sought a quick end and resolution to such suffering. The book contains three chapters and 47 verses.

Themes

- The coming of Christ – Judgment – church apostasy – Christian service

Key chapters/verse – 2, God's day and the man of sin / 2:13, 14

Key phrase / word / thought

- In Christ glorified / waiting / the Day of the Lord

Outline

- I. Persecution and the Lord's Coming (1:1-7)
- II. The impenitent and the Lord's coming (1:8-12)
- III. The Apostasy and the Lord's Coming (2:1-12)
- IV. Service and the Lord's Coming (2:13-3:18)

The unsaved – Know not God (1:8a); obey not the gospel (1:8b); receive not the love of the truth (2:10); believe not the truth (2:12); are guilty before God (Rom. 3:10-19); without excuse (Rom. 1:19); are already condemned (John 3:18).

The man of sin (2:1-12) – Prophecy is very often difficult to interpret where there is a lack of fulfillment specifics. For instance, this is the issue with the coming of Christ and those who would find a specific day and year for it, especially when we are told we do not know. Of course this does not mean the teaching is lacking or should be discounted, but rather reinforces to us the fact there are some things that belong to God alone. This difficulty arises in the New Testament several times, including the discussion of the "man of sin" or "man of perdition." While we are given several characteristics of the person and work of this "man of sin," he, if it is a single person at all, is never identified. There is much speculation, however, over this text and who the "man of sin" might be.

- **Papacy.** Many of the earliest commentators and few from today believe that the "man of sin" is a reference to the rise of the Catholic church model and the papacy. The language is enticing here and does make one think of some of the Catholic practices, but there are problems with this, namely that the man of sin was restrained in the days of Paul.
- **The anti-Christ.** Many believe this is a reference to the "person" that would come before Christ returns and attempt to overthrow Christianity with supreme diabolical schemes.
- **A Roman emperor.** Going all the way back to Daniel 7 and working forward prophetically to Revelation, this assertion basically states that a Roman emperor would begin to greatly persecute Christians and bring upon them great evil, though in Paul's day it was not full yet.
- **So, who is He?** Coupling Daniel 7 with Revelation 13 and 2 Thess. It seems most reasonable to assert that Rome is in view here with its emperor worship, increasing persecution and the fact that they were going to destroy Jerusalem in 70 A.D. which is detailed in those prophetic contexts. Some would narrow it to Nero, leading up to Jerusalem's destruction, while others say Domitian because he seems to fit the literal numbers. Whichever way one takes it, the message is the same – saints will always be persecuted because they have an enemy. Hold fast!