

## 2nd Thessalonians

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonian letter was written by the same 3 authors as the 1<sup>st</sup>, the apostle, prophet, and evangelist who had first preached Christ in Thessalonica, as seen in Acts 17:1ff. They wrote the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter soon after the 1<sup>st</sup> to respond to some specific confusion about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus.

The Thessalonian church was still experiencing persecution (1:4) and were continuing firmly with love for one another and faith in God.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus as a time of wrath and judgment, God's justice for the world, is emphasized in 1:5-2:12. At the same time that justice provides welcome into the fullness of the kingdom for the holy people of God (1:5, 7, 10; 2:13, 16).

Note the dynamic description of the unmistakable 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus in 1:7-8, and the nature of condemnation in separation from God in 1:9.

Various things confuse the minds of Christians about the Lord's return, including false messages from spirits and false reports (2:2-3). Paul told the Thessalonians that there would be a rebellion before the Lord returned (2:3-12), which some equate with future events yet to occur, but remember that the same writers had already told the brethren in 1 Thess 5:1-11 to live as though Christ might appear at any moment. Paul was not providing any sort of time line or "end times" signs in the words of 2 Thessalonians 2, but affirming a pattern seen over and over again in the Old Testament scriptures and the words of the prophets. The spirit of the "man of lawlessness" or "man of sin" is the same as that of the serpent in the Garden (Genesis 3) and the men of Babel (Genesis 11) or the Pharaoh of Egypt (Exodus 1-14, Ezekiel 29-31) or the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14) or the boastful little horn (Daniel 7). This recurring pattern of boastful rebellion against God's reign has happened over and over again in human history, and is happening still. Those who "refused to love the truth and so be saved" fall victim to the seduction by the activity of Satan in every generation (2:9-10). We need to love the truth and persist in faith taught by the Lord and his apostles (2:13-15). Whatever or whoever Paul meant by "he who now restrains it" in 2:6-7, perhaps in regard to the Jewish rebellion

of 66-70 AD, we can safely consider there is no discernable restraint hindering the Lord's return.

Idleness was a problem mentioned in the 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonian letter, and again in 2 Thessalonians 3:6ff. Christians are supposed to be busy and productive people, minding their own business and sharing the fruit of their labor with others who have need. Idleness and leisure time can quickly become a problem.

A guiding principle of "church discipline" is stated in 3:14-15. Chastening is intended to provoke shame that leads to change, not alienation or hostility.

Note that Paul signed the letter in 3:17, in view of the warning in 2:2.