

## Study 2

### Read 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2

2:1-3

v. 1 Notice the language of us being “gathered together” to Jesus. This is reminiscent of the metaphor about Jesus’ affection for God’s people from Matthew 23:37:

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.””

We can find this gathering language as well in the book of Psalms. Isn’t it fascinating to encounter words and phrases in different places in Scripture and see how they fit together, as God causes his prophecies to be fulfilled over time and his types to grow to fruition in their fullest forms?

What, from vv. 1-3, apparently, were the Thessalonians being tempted to feel and believe, which Paul was needing to correct?

How could the believers there possibly have thought that Jesus’ return had already happened?

To us, it seems somewhat silly, doesn’t it?

NOTE: Robert L. Thomas offers an explanation this way: “These readers who knew about the day knew that its earlier phase would be a time of heightened persecution for the saints. Their suffering had already been so severe that someone tried to convince them that the period was already in progress, even though the Lord had not yet come....”

What did Paul say must happen first, before the return of Jesus?

What phrases does Paul use to describe the “man of lawlessness?” See also verses 9-10.

2:4

Will this be a literal temple of God mentioned here, or a figurative one? And will he literally be proclaiming himself to be God, or by his actions showing that forth? Why?

2:6-7

Paul tells them that they know who/what it is that restrains this man of lawlessness. Do you know who it is?

There are different theories on who/what this restrainer might be. According to the ESV Study Bible, it could be the Roman Empire or emperor, the Holy Spirit, or the Archangel Michael. For further reading on the basis of these opinions, see Daniel 0:13, 20-21, and Rev. 12:7.

2:7

“mystery of lawlessness”—Why might lawlessness be called a mystery here?

2:8

This verse sounds not unlike Isaiah 11:3-4: “He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ear hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.”

Marvel at the power and glory of Jesus, our Champion! Take a minute to praise God for the present victory over sin we have in Him and also the ensured, pre-ordained ultimate defeat of evil at the end of the age.

2:10-12

It is very significant that we note the reasons for those who “are perishing.” What does verse 10 tell us is the reason?

Now see also in verse 11 what happens. Who sends the strong delusion, and what is the reason behind it?

How can it be that God would do such a thing?

Why would he ever want someone to believe what is false when He is the God of truth, and Satan is the Father of Lies?

List out some character traits that you know of God below.

Did you put justice on the list? If so, it's God's justice we see at work in this verse. It is right for God to punish sin. It is correct for a holy God to be intolerant of unrighteousness, and for there to be severe consequences for such rebellion.

For further comfort of your heart about the goodness of God, read 1 Peter 1:17: "And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile..." He can be trusted to judge impartially and correctly. Need we be concerned that we ourselves might be deceived by the lawless one? See Matthew 24:24 and Revelation 13:5-8 to aid you in your thinking.

2:12

See here the interesting contrast between belief in truth and sinful pleasure. These would not normally be things we would see as opposites. What do we learn from this?

Where is your delight? From where do you derive your greatest pleasure? Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also, we are taught by Jesus in the gospel of Matthew (6:21).

2:13

What contrast is indicated here by the word "but?"

Allow your mind to ruminate a moment on the fact that believers are called "beloved by the Lord." What a lavish phrase! That the Maker of the universe would stoop to care for us whatsoever is remarkable. How much more shocking is it that He would call undeserving us His beloved! What does the phrase "as the firstfruits" mean?

What Scriptures or biblical concepts come to mind that enlighten your understanding of what Paul is talking about here?

Through what, according to this verse, are we saved?

We see an evident connection between God himself (the Spirit) and man (belief in the truth) that brings about our salvation. God works to save us by giving us the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

2:14

Paul again refers to a “calling.” To what were the Thessalonians called? (See end of v. 13)

And through what are they said to be called?

Paul calls the gospel “our” gospel. Why do you think he would choose to use that possessive pronoun rather than merely saying, “the” gospel.” To what is he referring?

A purpose is given at the end of this verse. Why did God call our Thessalonian brothers and sisters?

In what way do believers obtain the GLORY of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We obtain salvation. We obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit. We obtain His promises. How do we obtain His glory, per se?

In chapter one, we also encountered this concept of us being glorified in Jesus, as well as Jesus in us (1:12). Turn back to 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 16-18, and read of a future glorification of which we will be a part. Then take a minute to praise our Lord for his gracious generosity in sharing His glorification with us after rescuing us from the grip of Satan and sin.

Read here a quote by George Swinnock (a Puritan) on what happens after death for a believer. The same could be said about our leaving this earth upon Christ's return: "The soul must be delivered from the prison of the body, so that it may enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This bird of paradise will never sing merrily, nor sing the praises of its Maker perfectly, until it is freed from this cage." Perhaps this is also some of what it looks like to obtain His glory.

2:15

The "so then" tells us that with the guarantee of their salvation, the Thessalonians are to therefore do certain things. What are they to do?

Allow Ephesians 4:14 to shed light on what it might mean to stand firm: "...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes..."

In what ways do we today need to be reminded to do the same things?

What temptations do we face in our culture that might draw us away from belief in the true gospel?

What competing ideas could lure us, unawares?

2:16

In this verse we see all three members of the Trinity at work. First the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned, then God our Father, and we also find the word "comfort" right here twice. We know elsewhere that the Holy Spirit is called our Comforter. It's always worth noting verses or passages in which we see the members of the Godhead working together. It is evidence for what we believe to be orthodoxy—that our deity consists of one God in three persons all working together in unity and harmony. Where else in this epistle do we see more than one member of the Trinity mentioned together?

We see that Paul chose to use verbs in the past tense in this verse. He LOVED us and GAVE us eternal comfort and hope, etc. In what way has God done these things in the past? To what is he referring?

2:17

On the heels of the last verse, we see the continuation of Paul's prayer. God, who has acted in the past, is being summoned through a benediction to act in the present to comfort the hearts of the Thessalonians. How encouraging it is to think that the Lord has not only acted in the past to accomplish this eternal comfort, but also comforts His people now. He knows our frailty and weakness, and is there to provide more grace in times of need. He delights to show Himself sufficient for us!

Paul also calls God to "establish them in every good work and word." Look back to the last chapter. We see similar wording in another verse. What verse is it? \_\_\_\_\_

When we see repetition in a book of the Bible, it gives us a glimpse into the heart and mind of the author. He is emphasizing those things for a reason. Why might Paul be repeating a similar prayer that God establish their good works?

Wrap up your time in this chapter by spending some time praying about the things the Lord has brought to your mind as you've read and studied. Thank Him for being our ever-present Comforter. Ask Him for strength to maintain the faith over your lifetime, forever holding to the one true gospel. Praise Him for our salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Request more grace to trust Him for His justice and to share the gospel with those who are perishing, that they might know the eternal life we walk in daily.