



**Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church
421 N. 2nd Street, Mankato, MN**

Sunday Bible Class

2 Thessalonians

July 2016

Author, Time, and Purpose of Writing

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians from Corinth some months after writing 1 Thessalonians in late 51 or early 52 A.D. Some critical scholars have suggested that the letter is a forgery, but their reasons for thinking so are not weighty. They claim, on the one hand, that 2 Thessalonians unnecessarily repeats information found in 1 Thessalonians and yet, on the other hand, they also claim there are differences in the two letters' teachings on the second coming of Christ. Repetition of content is found within the writings of many of the Bible's authors, as is the expansion of given themes. The tone and character of the letter certainly fit Paul, and the early Church unanimously attributed it to Paul.

Why was it written? "According to reports that reached Paul at Corinth (we do not know how; perhaps the congregation wrote to him), the Christians of Thessalonica were still standing firm under persecution (2 Th. 1:4). But false notions 'concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him' (2:1) had gained currency in the Church. Those who advocated these notions apparently appealed to some alleged prophetic utterance ('spirit') or teaching or writing of Paul to support them (2:2). The resultant excited, almost hysterical expectation (2:2) had led some to abandon their regular occupation and to lead an idle and disorderly life in dependence upon the charity of the church (3:6-12). Others, it would seem, struck by the high demands of the first letter (the demand that they be found 'blameless' at the coming of the Lord, 1 Th. 3:13; 5:23), had grown fearful and despondent concerning the coming of the Christ; for them, they felt, it would mean not deliverance, but judgment and destruction."

Outline: The Epistle to 2 Thessalonians

- I. Paul's Greeting and Offer of Thanksgiving (Chapters 1)*
- II. Paul's Exhortation and Encouragement about the End of Time (Chapter 2)*
- III. Paul's Apostolic Commands and Conclusion (Chapter 3)*

"Paul's second letter is his answer to the congregation's concerns about the return of Christ. It therefore sounds two notes. For those who indulge in overheated fantasies about the end times, there are sobering words that point to the events that must necessarily precede the coming of the Christ in glory (2 Th. 2:1-12). For the despondent and the fearful there is an eloquent and reassuring recognition of the new life that God has worked in them and a comforting emphasis on the certainty of their election by God (1:3-12; 2:13-15). Paul turns the church from both excitement and despondency to that sober and responsible activity which is the hallmark of the genuinely Christian hope. The hoping church turns from preoccupation with itself to God; the church must pray 'that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored' (3:1). The hoping church must work for its living in sober industriousness and work for its own health as the Church of God. It must discipline and correct all those whose lives are a departure from the apostolic word and example and are therefore denials of the real character of the Church (3:6-15)." [*Lutheran Bible Companion*, Vol. 2, p. 579]

Chapter Notes:

- 1:3-12** Note how faith grows and love abounds in the midst of persecution. Paul says that Jesus' glorious return will bring both rest and judgment.
- 2:1-12** Paul says Christ will not return until the "man of sin...the son of perdition" is revealed. Who is that? The Bible also refers to this "man" as the Antichrist. Paul's description fits the Roman Papacy.
- Note:** "Numerous misinterpretations and speculations have arisen from this prophecy. Many people contend that we cannot know for sure what the fulfillment of this prophecy is. Yet if we take everything that Paul says, neither leaving any of it out nor ignoring or altering the meaning of words, the fulfillment does become clear. This prophecy is fulfilled in the line of men who have served and will serve in the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church." [*The People's Bible—Thessalonians*, David Kuske, p. 89; read entire discussion, pp. 87-100.]
- 2:13-17** God's eternal election and calling of us believers will ultimately lead to glory. In the meantime, Paul prays that our hearts be strengthened.
- 3:3-5** Paul points out that the Lord is our Source of strength and direction.
- 3:6-15** Note Paul's admonition to be busy and working "so that we are busy doing good."

