

II Thessalonians

Introductory Section I

THE RELATIONSHIP OF II THESSALONIANS TO I THESSALONIANS

1. *II Thessalonians was sent only a few months after I Thessalonians.*
2. *The same three men (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) sent both of the Thessalonian epistles. And in both epistles, Paul was the main author.*
3. *II Thessalonians was sent from the same place as I Thessalonians, Corinth.*
4. *In both of the letters Paul expresses thanks for their faithfulness. I Thess. 1:2-3; II Thess. 1:3-4.*
5. *Both of the letters have the theme of Christ's second coming.*
(I Thessalonians discussed Christ's coming as it related to the dead and living saints. II Thessalonians discusses the coming as it relates to the everlasting perdition of the wicked, and to the man of sin who shall come before the Lord comes. See Introductory Section III of I Thessalonians.)
6. *Both epistles deal with the same problems:*
 - (1) *Persecutions and trials; I Thess. 3:3-4; II Thess. 1:4*
 - (2) *Misunderstanding about the Lord's coming.*
 - (a) *In I Thessalonians there were questions about what would happen to the dead in Christ at the Lord's coming, and exactly when the coming would be.*
 - (b) *In II Thessalonians there was the problem that some believed that the day of Christ had already come. II Thess. 2:1-2*
 - (3) *People who would not work. I Thess. 4:11; 5:14; II Thess. 3:10-11*

THINKING THROUGH THESSALONIANS

Introductory Section II

CHAPTER TOPICS AND OUTLINE OF II THESSALONIANS

A. *Chapter Topics of II Thessalonians*

Chapter 1—"God's Righteous Retribution"

Chapter 2—"The Man of Sin"

Chapter 3—"Withdraw From Idlers"

(Memorize these chapter topics NOW. While these topics do not cover everything that is in each chapter, if you will only remember these, you will have a general idea of what is in each chapter of the whole epistle.)

B. *Outline of II Thessalonians*

(More complete outlines are given at the beginning of the notes on each chapter. Note that each chapter closes with a prayer. Aside from the chapter topics, you will not need to memorize more of this outline now. The outlines will be studied more carefully as each chapter is considered.)

CHAPTER 1—"GOD'S RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION"

I. Address and greeting; 1:1-2

II. Thanks for their faith and love; 1:3-4

III. God's righteous retribution; 1:5-10

IV. Prayer for God's blessings; 1:11-12

CHAPTER 2—"THE MAN OF SIN"

I. Paul's entreaty about the Lord's coming; 2:1-3a

II. The man of sin; 2:3b-12

III. Thanksgiving for God's choosing the Thessalonians; 2:13-15

IV. Prayer that they be comforted and established; 2:16-17

CHAPTER 3—"WITHDRAW FROM IDLERS"

I. Request for prayer; 3:1-2

II. Expressions of confidence; 3:3-5

III. Withdraw from idlers; 3:6-15

IV. Prayer for peace; 3:16

Conclusion; 3:17-18

Introductory Section III

FACTS ABOUT II THESSALONIANS

(Memorize all facts in *italics*.)

1. *It was written by Paul the apostle.* Silvanus and Timothy joined with Paul in sending the letter.

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2. *It was written from the city of Corinth*, during Paul's second missionary trip.

(That the letter was written at Corinth during the second missionary trip is evident from the fact that Silvanus, or Silas, was with Paul up till that time, and apparently never afterwards. Silas became separated from Paul while he was at Corinth, for he is never afterwards mentioned as being associated with Paul.)

3. *It was written about A.D. 53*, just a few months after Paul sent I Thessalonians.

(The time between the two was probably only as long as it took I Thessalonians to be delivered, and a report brought back to Paul from Thessalonica.)

4. *The following problems are discussed in II Thessalonians:*

(1) They were enduring *continued persecutions*. II Thess. 1:4

(2) *Some had been misled to believe*, either by a supposed revelation, or by misunderstanding Paul's teachings, or perhaps even by a letter which Paul supposedly wrote, *that the day of Christ had already arrived*. II Thess. 2:1-2. This notion had caused them to become shaken, troubled, and excited.

(3) *Some had not obeyed Paul's exhortation in I Thessalonians about working, and were not working at all*, but were meddling and being busybodies. II Thess. 3:10-11

In II Thessalonians Paul *commands* such people to work, and puts some teeth into his command.

Introductory Section IV

DID PAUL REALLY WRITE II THESSALONIANS?

Yes. It is beyond serious question that Paul wrote this letter.

Many very ancient Christian writers quote or refer to passages in II Thessalonians. Polycarp (70-156 A.D.) alludes to 1:4 and 3:15. Justin Martyr (about 150 A.D.) refers to 2:3. Irenaeus (130-190 A.D.) quotes 2:8. Clement of Alexandria (about 195 A.D.) quotes 3:2. Tertullian (about 200 A.D.) quotes 2:1-2 as part of Paul's epistles.

It would have been impossible for men as ancient as these to have regarded II Thessalonians as an epistle of Paul, if it were not well certified as a true apostolic epistle.

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Some modern authors have questioned that Paul wrote II Thessalonians on the supposed ground that *the teachings about the second coming of Christ in II Thessalonians differs from that in I Thessalonians.*

In I Thessalonians Paul supposedly indicated that Christ's coming was very near and would be within their lifetime. Then in II Thessalonians he indicates that there would first have to be a falling away from the faith, and the appearance of the man of sin before the Lord came.

This is a manufactured contradiction, not based on truth. Paul was so far from being mistaken in I Thessalonians about Christ's immediate coming, that he could distinctly remind the Thessalonians (in II Thess. 2:5) that he told them while he was yet with them, before he ever wrote I Thessalonians, that the falling away would precede the Lord's coming.

There have been other even more flimsy objections to the fact that Paul wrote II Thessalonians, such as the extreme similarities of parts of the two epistles, and the difference in Paul's apparent attitude toward the church in the two letters.

DID YOU LEARN?

(Questions over the Introductory Sections of II Thessalonians)

1. What three men sent II Thessalonians? (Section I)
2. From what city was it sent?
3. How long after Paul sent I Thessalonians was it before II Thessalonians was sent?
4. For what was Paul thankful in both epistles?
5. What is the theme of both the Thessalonian epistles?
6. What three problems are dealt with in both epistles?
7. What are the chapter topics of II Thessalonians? (Section II)
8. With what does each chapter of II Thessalonians close?
9. During what missionary trip was II Thessalonians written? (Section III)
10. In what year was II Thessalonians written?
11. What had some of the Thessalonians been misled to believe about the Lord's coming?
12. What had caused them to have this misunderstanding?
13. What was the problem in Thessalonica about working?
14. What is a cause for which some have questioned the fact that Paul wrote II Thessalonians? Explain why this objection is not true. (Section IV)