

## 2 THESSALONIANS

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Lesson 1 w/Answers: Promises for the Persecuted

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

For this lesson, I have taken the Living Bible Translation of 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 and presented it below as a letter. Please read this letter to the church at Thessalonica, then answer the questions below.

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*Written By Paul in Corinth around 51-52 A.D.*

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Greetings from Paul

This letter is from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. It is written to the church in Thessalonica, you who belong to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Dear brothers and sisters,

We always thank God for you, as is right, for we are thankful that your faith is flourishing and you are all growing in love for each other. We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecutions and hardships you are suffering. But God will use this persecution to show his justice. For he will make you worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering, and in his justice he will punish those who persecute you.

And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven. He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power when he comes to receive glory and praise from his holy people.

And you will be among those praising him on that day, for you believed what we testified about him. And so we keep on praying for you, that our God will make you worthy of the life to which he called you. And we pray that God, by his power, will fulfill all your good intentions and faithful deeds. Then everyone will give honor to the name of our Lord Jesus because of you, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the undeserved favor of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

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1. Paul wrote this letter, many believe, shortly after he wrote 1 Thessalonians and probably in response to the report his messenger gave him upon returning from delivering the first letter. Based on this new letter, what do you believe the messenger told Paul about the Christians at Thessalonica?
  - a. ANSWER: It would appear from Paul's second letter to the Christians at Thessalonica that he had discovered that their faith was flourishing once again and that their love was also growing. As a result of their faith, they were suffering and enduring many hardships and persecution in the name of Christ.
2. Have you ever considered that Christ's return could happen today? When you have, what has your reaction been? How could it affect your current and future plans?
  - a. ANSWER: When at times we might think about Christ's Second Coming (i.e., that it literally could happen any day), we need to be careful how it affects our outlook, and our work in the Kingdom spreading the Good News and ministering to people's needs. We cannot allow our belief in Jesus' imminent return to dampen our hope and energy for working in his Kingdom. We should not run to the mountains and hide, or simply freeze in place, waiting for his return. Instead, it should inspire and empower us to be even bolder in these days, as we see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:25 tells us to encourage one another "...and all the more as you see the Day approaching." In Chapter 2 of 2nd Thessalonians, we will see that some of the Christians at that time were reacting differently to the news of Christ's Second Coming.
3. How could being under heavy persecution affect your belief regarding Christ's return? Is it possible this was also the case at Thessalonica?
  - a. ANSWER: It is counter-intuitive and amazing that when we are persecuted for our faith, it validates our faith and makes us stronger so that we can endure the persecution. After all, if we placed our faith in something meaningless, who would persecute us for that? However, the world knows Jesus is real, as is his Second Coming, so it will do anything to keep us from spreading the Gospel.

4. What do you suppose the church at Thessalonica was being persecuted for?
- a. ANSWER: We know that the Church at Thessalonica was being persecuted by the unbelieving Jews who did not like the Gospel since it was declaring Jesus as the Messiah—something that caused the unbelieving Jews there, just as in Jerusalem, to become very angry with the church. (See Acts 17:4-9.) We also know from 1 Thessalonians that some believers in the church were behaving immorally, and Paul had instructed them to stop this behavior. (See Acts 2:10-12.) Certainly one of the functions of the church at Thessalonica would have been to discipline the believers who were behaving poorly. The believers were facing pressures from both inside and outside the church: from within, by those who were being disciplined for their immoral behavior; and from without, by the Roman administration who did not like nor tolerate unrest, as well as by the unbelieving Jews who sought to suppress and refute their message. This would have set the church up for extreme persecution as their faith grew and the Gospel of Jesus' Second Coming was preached.
5. Paul writes that two groups of people will be judged immediately upon Christ's second return. Can you list them? As a hint, they are described as "those that don't \_\_\_\_\_" and "those that \_\_\_\_\_".
- a. ANSWER: When Jesus returns, he will bring judgement on those who persecute Christians, including "on those who don't know God" and "those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
6. Do you suppose that the groups referenced in the previous question might represent the disbelieving Jews and Gentiles who will persecute followers of Christ during the Tribulation period?
- a. ANSWER: The similarities between the persecutors at Thessalonica and those present when Christ returns who are also resisting the advance of Jesus' Kingdom are evident. The Anti-Christ and the False Prophet, i.e., the government and false religion, will again be persecuting those who believe and watch and wait in eagerness for Jesus' return.
7. Paul writes "they will be punished with everlasting destruction," which he defines as "forever separated from \_\_\_\_\_".
- a. ANSWER: Paul tells us that, "They will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power." (2 Thessalonians 1:9)
8. Is the above the same judgment as the "White Throne" judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15, where the books are opened and people are judged by what is written in them?
- a. ANSWER: Yes; Paul is referring to the same judgement that John describes in Revelation, known as the White Throne judgment. (See Revelation 20:11-15.) At this judgment, "Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15.)
9. We will be "among those praising him on that day." What day is that? When will this occur?
- a. ANSWER: Paul is referring to the time of the final judgment, the white throne judgment referenced previously in Revelation 20:11-15. We will be praising Him on that "Day," as it represents the end of evil, Satan, sin, and the final enemy's death. (See 1 Corinthians 15:26.) Following this judgment, God will reveal his new heaven and new earth, as well as the new city of Jerusalem, which will be our final home with Him forever. What a day of rejoicing that will be! For a preview, read Revelation Chapters 16-22.
10. How did Paul believe that this writing would be encouraging to the folks at Thessalonica, and to us?
- a. ANSWER: Throughout his letter, Paul provides assurance to us that "...God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven." So as we see the day approaching of Jesus' return, the true Church will be undergoing attacks and persecutions from both outside and within. There will be a great apostasy that will cause some to abandon their faith and allow lies to be taught as truth. Paul is assuring us, as he did those in Thessalonica, that it will all be worth it in the end. Jesus will be victorious over all of this, and will not only save us, but will provide us with rest and a beautiful heavenly home for all eternity. This message is as encouraging to us today as it was to the Christians at Thessalonica some two thousand years ago.

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May God bless you as we continue to study God's Word together.

In Christ,

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