

“So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by what we said or what we wrote.” (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

Spread the Word

We are to spread the Word. If Christ will punish His enemies, they need to hear the gospel before it is too late for them to repent and believe.

“In addition, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you.” (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

Get working

We are to get working. This is how we get ready for Jesus’ return.

“In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: “If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat.” For we hear that there are some among you who are idle. They are not busy but busybodies. Now we command and exhort such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and provide for themselves. But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10-2)

THE BIG READ – 2 THESSALONIANS

Introduction

The New Testament begins with the four Gospels which tell the story of Jesus’ earthly life, and Acts which traces the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

The remainder of the New Testament is made up of epistles or letters that were sent to individual Christians or churches. These letters addressed specific situations in the lives of believers and local churches, and through them we are taught how to live as God’s people in response to what Christ has done for us.

2 Thessalonians is the second of two letters written to the church at Thessalonica. Shortly after writing the first letter from Corinth in AD51, Paul felt the need to write another letter to this church.

The purpose of 2 Thessalonians

Paul wrote this letter because some false teaching had arisen in the church. There was a rumour going around saying that Jesus had already returned

This teaching about Jesus’ return had brought discouragement into the church (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). If the rumour that Jesus had returned was true, why were they still being persecuted? (see 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7). Wasn’t Jesus’ return going to bring an end to all hardship and suffering?

This teaching about Jesus’ return had also brought disobedience into the church. Some of the Thessalonian Christians had become idle, deciding that they did not need to work anymore (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-8, 10-11). This wasn’t a new problem (see 1 Thessalonians 5:14) but it had become worse.

So, Paul writes to teach them about Jesus' return and to correct any misunderstandings about it. By doing so, he aims to both encourage the persecuted Christians and warn the idle Christians. It is a letter that both reassures and rebukes.

The story of 2 Thessalonians

Like 1 Thessalonians, the big theme of 2 Thessalonians is the return of Jesus (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1). There are three parts to the letter.

Chapter 1: Hear the Encouragement – Jesus will return!

Paul encourages the persecuted Christians in the church that Jesus will return. He says that at the second coming of Christ, those who are persecuting them will get what they deserve (see 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 8-9), and they will be rewarded (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Chapter 2: Hear the Truth – Jesus will return!

Paul corrects the specific misunderstanding about Jesus' return, by teaching them that Jesus will not return until a certain event has taken place – the appearance of the man of lawlessness (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). This hasn't happened yet!

This man of lawlessness will oppose God, deceive people, but will be defeated (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4, 8-10).

Chapter 3: Hear the Warning – Jesus will return!

Paul says to the idle Christians, that because Jesus is yet to return, they need to get working. They are to follow Paul's teaching (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10) and his example (see 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

Jesus in 2 Thessalonians

Jesus is revealed in 2 Thessalonians as the Judge who delivers and destroys.

He is the Judge who will deliver His people

He will give relief to His persecuted followers (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

He will save all who believe in Him (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

He will gather His people (2 Thessalonians 2:1) and they will share in His glory (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

He is the Judge who will destroy His enemies

He will defeat the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

He will punish those who have troubled Christians (2 Thessalonians 1:6); those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9); and those who have not believed the truth but delighted in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

How then shall we live?

As we recognise that Jesus is the judge who will deliver His people and destroy His enemies, how should we respond?

Do not be alarmed

We are not to be alarmed. Jesus has not yet returned. He's not been defeated. He will do all that He said He would do.

“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him: We ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord has come.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

Stand firm

We are to stand firm. Keep trusting in Jesus. It will be worth it.