

Lesson 6 - 2 Thessalonians

Thanksgiving, Judgment at Christ's Return, Lawlessness and a Warning Against Being Idle

Many biblical scholars believe that the second letter to the Thessalonians was written at a much later date than Paul's first letter. The tone of this letter differs from the first letter and there seems to be a change in attitude regarding the imminent arrival of Jesus' return. This letter is often categorized as "Deutero-Pauline," meaning it was written under the pseudonym of Paul but may have been written by a disciple in order to honor Paul and continue his message. One of the focuses of this letter is God's judgment of those who are persecuting the Church. Chapter 2 contains one of the most detailed descriptions of the anti-Christ in the New Testament.

1. **Read the introduction to 2 Thessalonians in your bible and share any interesting information you find there with your group.**
2. **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 and footnotes. Share information found in the footnotes.**
 - a. **Note the language in the greeting that refers to God as "our Father." (2 Thess 1:1)**
 - b. **Reflection: In verses 1:5-6, why do you believe the Christians were suffering in Thessalonica?**
 - c. **What do verses 1: 5-10 say about the justice of God? Who will be punished and why?**
 - d. **What do those who are now afflicted receive later -1:7? When do they receive this?**
3. **Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1033-1035 below and 2 Thess 1:5-10.**
 - a. **Who are the fires of hell reserved for? (See CCC 1033 below)**
 - b. **How did Jesus describe the consequences of sin? (See CCC 1034)**
 - c. **What is the "chief punishment of hell" according to CCC 1035?**

CCC 1033 We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."⁶¹² Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.⁶¹³ To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."

CCC 1034 Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost.⁶¹⁴ Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire,"⁶¹⁵ and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!"⁶¹⁶

CCC 1035 The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire."⁶¹⁷ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

4. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and footnotes. Read also Matthew 24:23-24 on the next page. **Matthew 24:23-24** ²³ If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. ²⁴ False messiahs and false prophets will arise, and they will perform signs and wonders so great as to deceive, if that were possible, even the elect.
- a. Verses 2 Thes 2:1-2 contains a warning. What do these first verses describe?
 - b. Is this still a concern for us 2000 years later?
5. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5. The letter describes those events that must happen before Jesus returns.
- a. What must happen before Jesus' return?
6. Read again 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 and footnotes. The Anti-Christ or Lawless One, will be restrained or held back for a time.
- a. Reflection: What, in our world today, could *possibly* restrain the work of the evil one until the appointed time? (Check footnotes for help.)
 - b. Where does the Lawless One get his power, and why is he here?
 - c. What will happen to the Lawless One? See Revelation 20:10 below and 2 Thes: 2:8-9. **Revelation 20:10** The Devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
7. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5. Paul requests that prayers continue. For what are the faithful Thessalonians to pray?
8. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-16 and footnotes. Share any footnotes with your group.
- a. How important is a strong work ethic to Paul?
 - b. Does he practice what he preaches?
 - c. What do you suppose is meant by verse 11? Compare the translation of this verse in your bible with the NIV translation below.
- 2 Thes 3:11** We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. *They are not busy; they are busybodies.*
9. How are the Thessalonians to treat those who have ceased to work for their food, or have become "busy bodies?"
 10. How does Paul end this letter?