

2 THESSALONIANS: PAUL'S REVELATION ABOUT THINGS TO COME
SESSION 1 | 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-2 | PAUL'S GREETINGS TO THE THESSALONIANS

- The second letter to the Thessalonians was written, it is believed, shortly after the first.
- It is also the second Pauline letter to be penned, about 54 AD.
- In this letter, Paul gives revelation of *things to come*. The purpose of the letter is to correct error from a false teacher concerning things of the last days.
- Paul begins his letter expressing the grace and peace of which he has been made an ambassador.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-10 | INSIGHT ON PERSECUTED BELIEVERS

- Verses 3-4 –
 - Paul begins by expressing thanks, an expression which was required by any who knew the circumstances. Paul says that he (along with Silas and Timothy) were **bound to thank God** and that **it is meet**. The word for **meet** is ἀξιος [axios], and we might say that the giving of thanks was *axiomatic*.
 - The reason thanks was obligatory was threefold:
 - Their **faith groweth exceedingly**. Paul does not elaborate, but we would assume a growth in knowledge, boldness, courage, and understanding.
 - Their **charity...toward each other aboundeth**. The English word *charity* comes from the Latin *caritas* which was, originally, an exclusively Christian expression of love.
 - Their **patience and faith in...persecutions and tribulations** which were upon them. It is likely this trouble that caused both their faith and their charity to grow. We can only presume that the persecution was related to the persecutions that began in [Acts 17](#) with Paul's arrival.
 - Paul gloried in the Thessalonians **in the churches of God** (v. 4).
 - Paul used this phrase in [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#), specifying the churches in Judaea. He also used the phrase in [1 Corinthians 1:16](#).
 - In both places it is used in such a way that one could reasonably assume (but not prove) that he refers to believing Kingdom assemblies.
- Verse 5 –
 - The suffering of the Thessalonians was a **manifest token**, that is, an undeniably display **of the righteous judgment of God**.
 - That is to say that God was using the persecutions to separate the Thessalonian believers from the others (the Greek κρίσις [krisis] means "a separating").
 - The end result would be that the Thessalonians would **be counted worthy of the kingdom of God**.
 - This is problematic to a standard interpretation because the Gospel of grace is one in which our worth comes by Christ's righteousness. We are complete in Him, while the worth of the Thessalonians toward the Kingdom seems based on their endurance (a key-word in Kingdom theology).
 - Only by rightly dividing can this passage be understood without confusion.
 - The Thessalonians were Jewish believers living in an age when the Kingdom was being offered and God was *separating* the wheat from the chaff.
 - Later this offer would be put in full abeyance, and we live in a day of abeyance, not a day of the Kingdom offer.
 - Is the fact that they were suffering for the Kingdom evidence that the Kingdom was present?
 - Most of the *kingdom now* proponents would attest to such. However, this would be like arguing that those of [Hebrews 11](#) suffered because that which they looked for was present, while **These all died in faith, not having received the promises** ([Heb. 11:13](#)).

- Furthermore, if a *present kingdom* involves suffering, then it is a very weak and incompetent kingdom (and such cannot be said of the coming kingdom of God).
- Verse 6 –
 - We know that God is going to **recompense tribulation** to those who trouble the Jewish remnant (of which the Thessalonians were part).
 - Can we develop a doctrine of “Christian recompense” in which God will **recompense tribulation** on those that trouble *me*?
 - To do so would require that we sacrifice many of the principles of the age of grace, including the fact that God is not counting trespasses against sinners today ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)).
 - In the *kingdom realm* there is a blessing and a curse to those who bless or curse those who inherit the kingdom (see [Rev. 11:18](#), etc.). In the *church* realm, no such blessing and curse exists.
- Verse 7 –
 - Not only does God give **recompense** (v. 6), but also **rest** (v. 7) - note that **rest** is a *noun*, not a verb.
 - What **rest** does God give a **recompense** to the troubled? When Scripture is allowed to interpret itself, the **rest** is nothing less than the blessings of the Kingdom.
 - The book of Hebrews alone is enough to convince of this fact. See [Hebrews 3:11, 18, 4:1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11](#).
 - To prove from this passage alone that the **rest** in question is eschatological (i.e.: *kingdom*), we see that Paul says that this **rest** will come **when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels**.
 - This is not a Pauline revelation, but is about the time in which **the Lord Jesus shall be revealed**, the word **revealed** being translated from ἀποκάλυψις [apokalypsis], the same word that is the basis for the Revelation of John.
 - Note: it is likely that **with his mighty angels** can be used as the interpretive key for [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#).
- Verse 8-9 –
 - The Lord, in His Second Coming, will also appear **in flaming fire**, likely a metaphor for the **vengeance** that He will give to those who **know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 8).
 - This clearly tells us that *someday the age of grace comes to a close* (though this verse does not let the reader know that it closes at the rapture).
 - It also tells us that there is a dual requirement for avoiding vengeance. Those who avoid this vengeance must:
 - Know God. An unknown God cannot be a saving God.
 - Obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. Note here that:
 - The clear word is **obey** and not **believe**. Immediately we know that Paul cannot be writing about *his gospel*, which is one of belief alone.
 - Paul specified *which gospel*. The “good news” of Jesus Christ *was* one of obedience, as a simple reading of the Gospels will testify. By dispensational necessity Paul must be speaking of the Lord’s gospel, because that is the gospel proclaimed after the rapture and until the Second Coming.
 - Those who do not know God and obey will **be punished with everlasting destruction** (v. 9), just as seen in Revelation 20.
- Verse 10 –
 - Paul mentions two things that happen at the Second Coming.
 - The Lord is **glorified in his saints**. Any study of prophecy will reveal that the Lord’s glory upon His return is His inheritance, Israel. This is not a reference to the church.
 - The Lord will be **admired in all them that believe**. The pronoun **them** must certainly be a reference to **his saints**.
 - Paul remarks (parenthetically) that **our testimony among you was believed** and thus there would be many believers **in that day**. Paul’s testimony among the Thessalonians, as we know from [Acts 17](#), was a kingdom message among the Jews in the synagogue. This testimony will also have power **in that day**. The statement causes one to consider that the Jewish people will likely turn to the writings of Paul in the last days, and in doing so come to a full understanding of the Lord and His work in the dispensations. The lack of such understanding keeps Jews in a partial blindness.