

1

Paul's Missionary Journeys and Where Second Thessalonians Was Written



2

II Thessalonians Chapter 1 – Scripture Questions

1. What was the evidence that the Thessalonians were worthy of the kingdom of God? (vs. 3)
 - a. Their _____ was growing
 - b. Their _____ was increasing
 - c. They persevered in the face of _____.
2. Who heard Paul's boasting about the Thessalonians? (vs. 4)
3. What does God's justice bring? (vs. 6, 7)
4. What will happen to those who reject God and the gospel of Jesus? (vs. 8, 9)
5. What is meant by "everlasting destruction"? (vs. 9)
6. Paul included the Thessalonians in those he called "His (Jesus') holy people." Why? (vs. 10)
7. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians. What did he want God to do for them? (vs. 11)
 - a. God would count them _____ of His calling
 - b. God would fulfill _____
 - c. God would fulfill every act prompted by _____

II Thessalonians Chapter 1 – What Did It Mean to Them?

This letter was written very soon after 1 Thessalonians—possibly only a few months. There were three main developments that made this letter important: 1) Persecution of the Thessalonians had grown more severe, and some of them were beginning to despair, 2) a fake “letter from Paul” was at the point of convincing some believers that the end time was already happening, and 3) the nearness of Christ’s return had been misused as a reason for shirking work. Therefore, Paul’s intent with this letter was to give them reasons to hang on in the face of persecution, to make clear the events that would happen on the day of the Lord, and to give instructions on how to discipline those who were refusing to work.

Paul was very excited over their progress in faith and love. Their progress was an answer to his prayer. Evidently the Thessalonians themselves were discouraged about their failures and so were unable to appreciate how much they had improved. Paul wanted them to know that he was telling the other churches about them and their love for one another.

It was undoubtedly encouraging for the Thessalonian believers to hear this confirmation of their relationship with God, and that at Christ’s coming this worthiness would be openly declared by God. The persecution they were experiencing was, in a way, proof of their standing with Christ. There must have been some comfort as well in the reassurance that those responsible for persecuting Christians would be punished. Those who denied Christ and persecuted his people would themselves be denied entrance into the Kingdom.

Paul teaches that Christians can look forward to the Lord’s coming because they will not be present in this world for the terror and misery, because their promised rest in heaven will have begun by then. With this kind of hope, they have every reason to continue in faithful living.

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II Thessalonians Chapter 1 – Application Questions

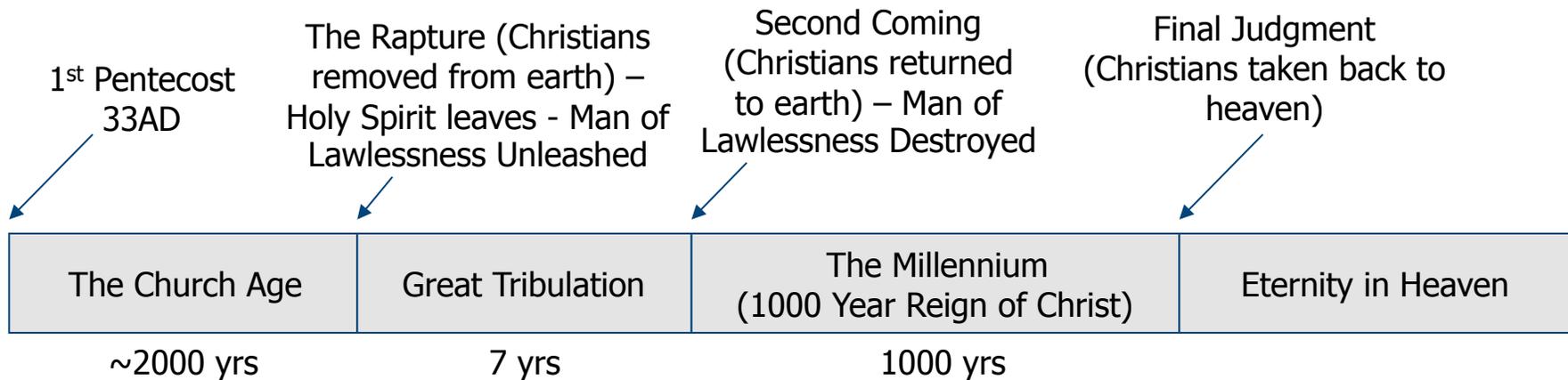
1. Paul said the Thessalonians were growing in faith and love. We know we are saved by grace, not by good deeds or works. So how are we supposed to measure if we are growing as Christians? How can we tell if we are maturing?
2. From what Paul says, it looks like people who give us grief will pay for it at the end of the world. I know God is in charge of judgment, but is it okay if I keep a list of people that I hope will 'get theirs' when the end comes?
3. Some people disagree about Hell – some think it is literal eternal fire and others that it is a metaphor for separation from God. Which is right? Does it matter?
4. Because we are believers, our tickets to heaven are safe. Why can't we relax, spiritually speaking, and take it easy?

II Thessalonians Chapter 2 – Scripture Questions

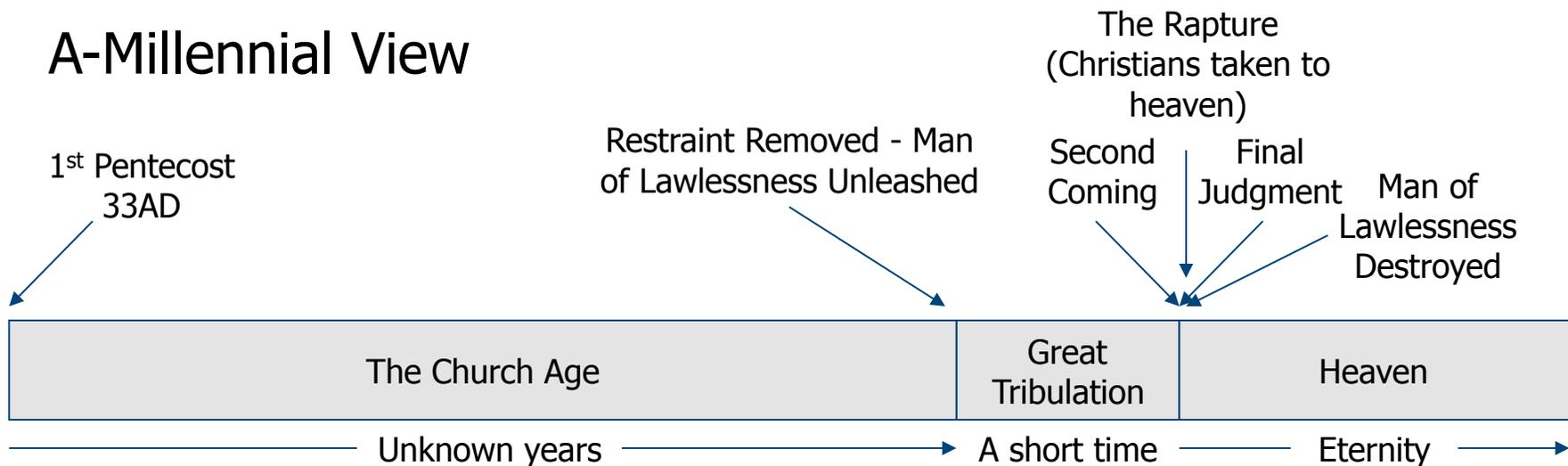
1. What were the Thessalonians worried about? (vs. 1,2)
2. When would the Day of the Lord come? (vs. 3)
3. What doom will come on the Man of Lawlessness? (vs. 3)
4. What will the Man of Lawlessness oppose and what will he do? (vs. 4)
5. When will the Lawless One be revealed? (vs. 7)
6. What will destroy the Lawless One? (vs. 8)
7. How will the work of Satan be displayed? (vs. 9,10)
8. Why do the lost perish? (vs. 10)
9. Who will be condemned? (vs. 12)
10. When did God choose the Thessalonians to be saved? (vs. 13)
11. How were those chosen by God saved? (vs. 13)
12. How were those chosen by God called? (vs. 14)
13. Why were those chosen by God called? (vs. 14)
14. What did Paul want those who God chose to do? (vs. 15)
15. What did Paul pray for those who God chose? (vs. 17)

6 II Thessalonians Chapter 2 – The Man of Lawlessness

Pre-Millennial View



A-Millennial View



II Thessalonians Chapter 2 – What Did It Mean To Them?

Paul must begin by explaining what he means by “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”, otherwise the solution to their problem can’t be understood. In Paul’s understanding, the gathering of the saints in the air to meet Jesus is the event that begins ‘the day of the Lord’. Therefore, since Christ had not personally appeared, the Day had not yet come. Also, they were promised an immediate ‘rest’ and glorification with Christ, not increased persecution. Evidently the false instruction they had received said that there would be even more, and worse, persecution, possibly even martyrdom. In order to reassure the Thessalonians that they had not missed the coming of Christ, he offers more explanation to counteract the deceptions.

The word ‘rebellion’ points to a deliberate abandonment of a belief or profession. Paul is telling them that after the rapture of those who are truly believers, those who called themselves Christians but were not really believers would find it easy to turn their backs on God. This would be a world-wide anti-God movement. Following and at the same time will come the unveiling of an important, powerful person that embodies everything opposed to God. This is the person Paul calls ‘the man of lawlessness’.

Most likely the one who is currently restraining the rebellion and the man of lawlessness is the Spirit. Once the body of Christ has been taken away to heaven, the Spirit’s ministry on Earth will be at an end.

Paul seems to teach that after Christ has taken the Church/Body to heaven, Christ will return to earth to bring divine judgment on all those who oppose God. Since they have deliberately turned their backs on God, they have willingly chosen wickedness; they cannot blame anyone except themselves when their punishment occurs.

Paul closes with a prayer. He knows that he and his co-workers cannot make the appeal effective; only God himself can do this. He knows that this prayer will be answered because the Son and the Father love them.

II Thessalonians Chapter 2 – Application Questions

1. This Anti-Christ guy (the Man of Sin) sounds scary – is he real or a metaphor for something?
2. Is the Man of Sin alive right now? How will we recognize him?
3. A lot of people I know are living crazy, destructive lives – are they being misled by Satan or the Anti-Christ?
4. Paul says we should hold firm to what we've been taught and follow the traditions we've been given. Some traditions go out of date and need to be thrown out. How can we tell when it's time to get rid of long-held traditions?

II Thessalonians Chapter 3 – Scripture Questions

1. Paul asked for prayer for two specific things. What were they? (vs. 1, 2)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. The Lord is faithful and he will _____ and _____ you from the evil one. (vs. 3)
3. Where did Paul want the Thessalonian's hearts directed? (vs. 5)
4. Who were the Thessalonians to keep away from? (vs. 6)
5. How did Paul describe the way he worked? Why did he work this way? (vs. 8, 9)
6. What was the result of idleness? (vs. 11)
7. How were the Thessalonians supposed to discipline lazy people? (vs. 14)
8. What was the distinguishing mark of Paul's letters? (vs. 17)

II Thessalonians Chapter 3 – What Did It Mean To Them?

At this point in his letter, Paul feels that he has dealt adequately with the questions and concerns about the return of Jesus Christ to this world. So he moves on, as he usually does, to ask for prayers on his behalf as he spreads the gospel. At the time he was writing from Corinth, and he was having to deal with unbelieving Jews there who were opposing him. It is worth noting that the ‘wicked and evil’ people existed because they did not have faith. Paul encourages the Thessalonians and motivates them by reminding them that God’s love and Christ’s endurance of suffering will make it possible for them to live faithfully.

Evidently there were members of the Thessalonian church who had simply stopped working because of their belief that Jesus was returning very soon. They were not only idle, they were disruptive busybodies. Interestingly, Paul does not recommend that these people be put out of the church—excommunicated—but that they not be fed. He seems to be wanting the loafers to be embarrassed and shamed into going back to work. This, of course, would give them less time to be busybodies! In Corinth, the trouble had become so large that people outside the church were commenting on it, casting disrespect on the Corinthian church. In Thessalonica the trouble was still small enough that it could be dealt with ‘in house’. These lazy brethren were not to be treated as an enemy, cut off from all contacts, but allowed to continue in worship. The lines of communication were kept open for warnings and, hopefully, for changes in behavior.

At the end, and after a pastoral prayer, Paul takes the pen into his own hand to add a closing greeting. He calls attention to it, apparently expecting churches where he had served to recall his distinctive handwriting. It was particularly needed in this letter so that it could be defended as authentic. This was one way to push back against the fraudulent letter sent to the Thessalonians.

Significantly, no one was excluded from Paul’s good wishes toward this church, not even those people who had been rebuked by him. Paul’s goal was always that people should be saved, and in a relationship with God.

II Thessalonians Chapter 3 – Application Questions

1. How specific are prayers supposed to be?
2. Is it a good idea to keep a list of the answers to prayer that we get (like a prayer journal)? Why or why not?
3. Paul says people who will not work should not eat – how do we apply this idea? Who should make the decisions about which people are fed?
4. Since our church is composed of human people, not saints, we must assume that there are members who (occasionally) cause trouble. Do you feel that embarrassment and shame are effective in making these people behave themselves? If not, how should they be corrected?