

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON FOURTEEN

II THESSALONIANS

Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written doubtless soon after the first, and for a very important reason, which will appear in the sequel.

I. Salutation, 1:1-2

II. Thanksgiving, 1:3-10

The thanksgiving extends practically from verse 3 to 10, and contains some matters of great importance to be considered.

In the first place, what should you say was the spiritual condition of the church now, as compared with the earlier occasion?

- what does verse 3 indicate as to this?

You will agree doubtless, that its spiritual condition was excellent, even better than before.

- but what about its outward or physical condition?

- what says verse 4 about it?

- what was GOD's purpose in thus calling them to suffer (v. 5)?

If it were a righteous thing for GOD to give them the kingdom as a result of their tribulation, observe that it was equally a righteous thing for Him to give their enemies tribulation for causing it (v. 6).

To the saints the tribulation was a "threshing," a separation of the precious from the vile, the wheat from the chaff, but to their enemies it was "**a just recompense of reward.**"

Observe further, when these discriminating judgments would be experienced by the two classes (v. 7). It would be at the revelation of the Lord JESUS.

- who would accompany Him at this time? And for what purpose would He come (v. 8)?

This raises the question as to whether Paul is here speaking of precisely the same event as that in I Thessalonians 4:13-18? The two events do not look alike, do they?

- in the former instance the Lord was coming for His saints, here He is coming with His angels.
- there He was coming to translate His church, here to take vengeance on His enemies.

Verse 10 throws a little light on this, "**When he shall come.**" The time then when JESUS will be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels taking vengeance on His enemies, will be when He shall have come, i. e., after He shall have come, to be glorified in His saints, in other words, after the rapture of the church spoken of in the earlier Epistle.

His coming for His church is known as His "coming," His revelation to His enemies is known as His "revelation," and these two events are really two aspects of but one event, or two acts in one drama, separated doubtless by a certain period of time.

It is during this time of separation between the two that those earthly events transpire of which we learned in the Old Testament, and which will culminate in the restoration of the Jews to their own land, the gathering of the Gentile nations against them, and the manifestation of the Antichrist.

To quote Dr. Bullinger, of London, in this place: "From these passages it is clear that when the judgment on the ungodly is revealed, the Lord shall have already and previously come to be glorified in His saints '**in that day,**' and have given them the promised '**rest**' of which Paul had already told them in the former Epistle, and reminded them in this chapter, verse 7. '**In that day,**' at the end of verse 10, refers to that glorious day of which the apostle had spoken so fully in I Thessalonians 4. All hope of rest, reward, and glory is to be consummated '**in that day.**' "

III. Prayer, 1:11-12

IV. Cause for the Epistle, 2:1-2

We now reach a statement as to the reason or occasion for this second Epistle, written very soon, doubtless, after the first.

It seems that false teachers had followed Paul into Thessalonica, some even forging his name to a letter, who had sought to lead the church astray as to some of these important matters about the Lord's second coming. As we have just seen, that great event may be spoken of under two aspects or two acts of a single drama. One was described as His "coming" for His saints, the other later one as His "revelation" in judgment on His enemies. The first has been identified with His "presence," the second with "**The Day of the Lord**," so frequently named in the Old Testament.

To quote Dr. Bullinger again: "Paul had taught them that before '**the Day of the Lord**' should come, they would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with the Lord. In other words, that He would come and receive them unto Himself, before that great and terrible day should set in."

But these false teachers thus spoken of, had sought to reverse this teaching in a measure, and to have them believe that the day of the Lord had already come, for such is the meaning of the latter half of verse 2. This tribulation they were enduring was pointed to, no doubt, as an evidence of it. If, therefore, the day of the Lord had set in, and they had not been gathered together unto Him, they had every reason to be troubled, for then their faith and hope were vain, and Paul had deceived them.

Let us see, therefore, how the apostle offsets this false teaching, in the doing of which, by the way, he reveals matters of deep interest concerning the apostasy which is to be headed up in the Antichrist.

V. Apostasy and Rise of the Antichrist, 2:3-7

What does Paul say must come before the Day of the Lord comes (v. 3)? Remember, please, that by the Day of the Lord is not meant His coming for His saints and their translation into the air, but His revelation of Himself after that event to His enemies in flaming fire.

He says there must come a "**falling away**" first, that is, an apostasy from the truth in the church. And who will then be revealed as heading up that apostasy, no doubt?- how is this "**man of sin**," "**the son of perdition**," further described in verse 4? He is against all that is called GOD, from which fact it is that he obtains the title of "Antichrist." What does he himself, however, assume to be? And in what place will he set forth this assumption?

This reference to his sitting in the "**temple of God**," recalls Daniel's prophecy quoted by our Lord in Matthew 24, about the "**abomination of desolation**" being established there, for the temple referred to, doubtless, is that at Jerusalem. We have seen all along that the prophets are a unit as to its re-building when the Jews shall have been returned there (still in an unconverted state so far as their acceptance of JESUS as their Messiah is concerned).

But had not Paul spoken of these matters at all during his presence in Thessalonica (v. 5)?

Yet there was some power withholding, restraining the full development of this apostasy, and the revelation of the Antichrist, according to verse 6. What was this power? Some would say the power was the iron rule of the Roman Empire, and by parity of reasoning the rule of the

successors of the Roman Empire in our own time. But a more satisfactory answer is that the power was the HOLY SPIRIT. He was restraining, keeping back, the full development of the apostasy until the elect body of CHRIST should be called out from the world. When that is complete, and caught up to meet its Head in the air, there is a sense in which it may be said that the Holy Spirit leaves the earth with it. That is, He ceases to exercise the same restraining power over lawlessness and sin that He now does.

This stands to reason, for the church is the medium He chiefly uses at the present time as the preserving salt of the earth, and when it is removed there will be little to withstand the hastening process of corruption.

This idea is further strengthened by the seventh verse, which declares that the "**mystery of iniquity**," the apostasy, was already at work even in Paul's own day, "**only He who now letteth** (i. e., restraineth), **will let** (or restrain) **until He be taken out of the way**."

In the foregoing exposition I have given my own opinion and that of expositors generally, as to the interpretation of the words, but it is only right to say that some others, take quite a different view of the meaning of verse 7. With them it is not the HOLY SPIRIT who is holding "back" something, but Satan rather, who is holding "on" to something - holding on to his possessions in the heavenly places, in the air, until he be cast out, i. e., into the earth, as will be the case when JESUS and His church come to take possession of the regions he now occupies (Revelation 12:9-12; 13:1).

I need not dwell upon the matter further, because the opinion I have given above is not set aside in any practical sense even if Satan be the one referred to in verse 7. In other words, it still remains true that the HOLY SPIRIT in the church is the great restraining power of iniquity, and when that power is removed, as, of course, it will be at the translation, iniquity will have an opportunity to quickly culminate.

VI. Destruction of the Antichrist, 2:8-12

To return now to the text, What shall be the end of the Antichrist (v. 8)? Compare here Isaiah 11:4.

- what shows that as the CHRIST when He was on the earth was energized by the HOLY SPIRIT, His great opponent when He comes, shall be energized by Satan (v. 9)?
- but who, alone, will be ultimately deceived by his signs and lying wonders (v. 10)?
- and who will be to blame for their credulity (same verse)?
- what do they fail to do that leaves them a prey to Antichrist's deceit?
- what judicial punishment now falls upon them (v. 11)?
- but is this their ultimate punishment or only a step towards it (v. 12)?
- what is their ultimate punishment (same verse)?

VII. Conclusion, 2:13-3:18

What a blessed contrast we meet with in the verse that follows!

The apostle having about completed the doctrinal or rather dispensational part of his letter now turns to matters personal and social again. But first of all, on the ground of their calling through grace (vv. 13, 14).

- what obligation does he lay upon them in verse 15?
- to whom does he commend them, and for what twofold object (vv. 16, 17)?
- what request does he make of them on his own behalf (3:1, 2)?
- what opinion does he hold of them, and what ground has he for holding it (vv. 3, 4)?
- what command is given them (v. 6)?
- what was the nature of the "disorderliness" referred to (vv. 7-11)?
- to what subject of his first Epistle does this bear reference?
- does he address himself directly to these disorderly members of the church (v. 12)?
- how was the church to treat them while they thus remained disorderly (vv. 14, 15)?
- what token of validity does Paul add to this letter to offset any further forgeries of his name (v. 17)?

~ end of Lesson 14 ~
