

Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

2nd Thessalonians

"Yes, God Really is Going to
Judge the World"

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Bible Studies

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2nd Thessalonians

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II Thessalonians Chapter 1 “Yes, God Really is Going to Judge the World”

“Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the LORD Jesus Christ: grace and peace to you from God the Father and the LORD Jesus Christ.” (II Thessalonians 1:1&2)

As we start this new book, let’s do a little comparing...is there any difference between the greeting in II Thessalonians and the greeting in I Thessalonians? Actually, they are pretty much the same...and because of its similarity to the first letter to the Thessalonians, it is assumed that II Thessalonians was written not long after...perhaps not more than 6 months after, I Thessalonians. Possibly Paul wrote this letter while he was still in Corinth, in AD 51 or 52, right after Silas and Timothy returned from delivering the original letter.

Paul’s three reasons for writing seem to be almost the same, too, as those in the first letter...

- encouragement because of persecution
- urging to work hard
- teaching them about the return of the LORD

Paul does have one new thing to tell them about the LORD’s return...we’ll see that in Chapter 2.

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trails you are enduring. All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.” (II Thessalonians 1:3-5)

Paul sees that their faith is growing, their love for each other is increasing, and they are persevering. All three of those things were telling Paul the Thessalonians were doing OK, even in the midst of their continued suffering.

“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the LORD Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our LORD Jesus.” (II Thessalonians 1:6-8)

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Someday the LORD will pay back, judge, the unrighteous for their unbelief and their sin, and for everything they have done to the righteous.

That has to raise three questions in our minds:

1. What do we mean by “judge”?
2. How could a loving God do that?
3. Am I unrighteous or righteous in God’s eyes?

First, let’s look at a few verses which also teach that the LORD is, indeed, going to judge the world someday, and then let’s talk for a few minutes about those questions...because, the truth is, I think most people would admit to asking all of these questions at one time or another in their lives.

The verses we could choose from are almost innumerable...these barely scratch the surface:

Job 21:30 “The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction. They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.”

Psalms 50:3 “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.”

Psalms 96:13 “The LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”

Ezekiel 18:20 “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Matthew 13:41-49 “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that do offend, and them which do iniquity: And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. So shall it be at the end of the world....”

Luke 12:2 “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be know. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you should fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

Hebrews 9:27 “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...”

II Peter 3:10 “The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

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Jude 14&15: Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Rev. 11:18 " The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

Rev. 20:11-15 "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Now...our questions:

1. What do we mean when we say "judge"?

As I look at scripture, it seems to me that there are two types of "judgments" still coming for the people on the earth:

God's wrath – in other words, punishment

And

God's rewards –in other words, recognition for a job well-done

Let's look first at God's wrath.

- a. God's wrath was totally poured out on Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross. Every sin that every single person ever committed from the time of Adam & Eve all the way up to every sin that every single person ever will commit until the end of the world – every single sin was heaped upon Jesus as He hung on the cross. Then the wrath of God was poured down on Him and on those sins, and he died. If any person understands what Jesus did on that cross, and accepts the gift He offers – His death instead of theirs – that person will never have to endure the wrath of God himself. (Romans 5:6-9)
- b. God's wrath will also be totally poured out on all people yet alive on the earth when the Day of Lord comes. For a small chunk of time during the last 7 years – the time prophesied by the prophets – the LORD will pour out His wrath on all of mankind for the sin of rejecting Him and His gift of salvation. (I Thessalonians 5:1-3)

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- c. And God's wrath will be completed when, at the Great White Throne Judgment, every dead person is resurrected from their graves, brought to stand before Him, and sentenced to eternal suffering in the Lake of Fire because their names are not recorded in the Book of Life. In other words, while they were alive they rejected the Savior they needed. They did not accept His gift of salvation. They did not believe in Him. (Only the dead appear at this judgment. And at that time in history, every believer in Christ is alive...every non-believer is dead)

No person who has accepted Christ as Savior will have to endure the wrath of God. That is what they have been saved from. (I Thessalonians 5:9) If you are a Christian and you have wondered if you will ever have to appear at the Great White Throne judgment, you can rest in Jesus – He has already suffered the punishment, the shame and the wrath of God for you.

If you are a Christian, then the only judgment waiting for you is the judgment of God's rewards....called the Judgment Seat of Christ. Look at I Corinthians chapter 3:10-15, and see what will happen there.

When a person asks Christ to be their Savior, they become a "builder". Someone who works to partner in building the Kingdom Jesus is getting ready. The works which we do as Christians we do because Jesus has already saved us from the wrath of God, not in order to make ourselves worthy to escape the wrath of God.

In I Corinthians 3 Paul is telling us that the works we do after we believe in Christ are either wood, hay, or stubble....or they are gold, silver, and precious stones? What is the difference? Wood, hay or stubble are things we do in our own strength, trusting in our own intelligence, abilities, physical strength, or knowledge. Gold, silver and precious stones are the works we do by faith...seeing something from God's Word which we should do, and then trusting Jesus to help us do it....not trusting in ourselves.

At the judgment of rewards, the Judgment Seat of Christ, there will be a fire – a revealing fire – which will burn up the wood, hay & stubble, but leave pure and beautiful the gold, silver and precious stones. The works we have done by faith will be rewarded at this judgment. We may suffer a sense of loss as we see how little we have done by faith...but we will not be punished. We will live forever in His presence...grateful for His salvation.

There are those who will face judgment/punishment...but believers in Christ are not among them.

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2. How could a loving God judge/punish people?

I think the answer to that is: **it's going to be hard**. He created every person in this world a long, long time ago. He placed the "seed" of every man and woman inside of Adam when He first created the world, looking forward to the time when each of us would be born. That's why it was such an incredible tragedy when Adam and Eve chose to disobey their maker. Inside of them was us...and we were doomed to inherit their sin nature from that point on.

And not just their sin nature...we also inherited their promised punishment for sin. The LORD told them, in Genesis 3:17 *"...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

That promised punishment...death...began in the Garden of Eden. They actually did die immediately...in their spirits. Their spirit – that part of them which was able to communicate and love their Maker – died. Now they would feel like strangers in His presence...be afraid of Him...no longer long for their walks in the garden in the cool of the day. They were dead on the inside.

But the promised punishment was more than just spiritual death – it was also physical death. And although they did not die right that minute...death began for them...their bodies began to decay at that minute – and death came eventually.

As their heirs, we inherited both kinds of death. We are born into this world alive in our bodies, but dead in our spirits. The wonderful place inside of us that was meant to communicate with God is just plain dead. We have no desire for God. No longing for Him. No ability to reach out to Him. We are dead inside.

And, the moment we are born, we are also dying physically. Decay begins right away. The one thing that is absolutely, perfectly sure about each of us when we are born is that we will someday die. Ecclesiastes 3:2 says there is *"...a time to be born and a time to die."*

But the LORD didn't create us because He wanted to see us walking around on this earth dead on the inside, and dying on the outside. He wanted us to be alive. Fully, wonderfully, amazingly alive. *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly."* (John 10:10b) He wanted us to laugh with Him, and love Him, and enjoy Him. And He wanted us to laugh, love, and enjoy each other.

You can see, then, that bringing down His promised punishment on us is going to be incredibly hard for Him. It will cause untold grief to His Father-heart...but it must be done. Because God is God. He is both loving and just. If He decided not to be just, only to be loving, then He would not be God any more. God is both. God has to be God. It isn't a question of "is that fair?" It isn't something which we can argue God out of. He is Who He is. We are who we are.

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That's why He must punish sin. Whoever dies with unrighteousness still in their life...God has no choice but to judge and destroy that person. Because God is God.

3. Am I unrighteous or righteous in God's eyes?

Therefore, the only question which matters is: Am I one of the ones God will have to destroy? Am I an unrighteous person...with sin still mucking up my life...or am I a righteous person...able to look God in the eye? Answering that question is the most important thing any person can do.

And here's the good news: every person ever born on planet earth is given a chance to be completely righteous....a chance to escape the penalty of death.

Jesus said: *"I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."* (John 8:51) In other words, if a person believes what Jesus said, righteousness is given to that person. Not something earned, but a gift. What is it that person must believe? That Jesus Christ is God Himself, and died on the cross to take the punishment for each person's unrighteousness, and then didn't stay dead, but made Himself alive, and is alive today.

Hmmm. So, ask the question and point the finger at yourself for a minute. Have I believed that? Before you answer that, here's something which will help you get a clearer picture: the word "belief" does not just mean understanding that something is true. It means understanding that something is true, and **then acting on it**.

So let's try this one more time. Ask the question and point the finger at yourself: Have I understood that Jesus Christ, God Himself, died on the cross for me, and then didn't stay dead?.....**And**.....Have I acted on it? Have I bowed my knee before Jesus Christ, Who is very much alive right now, and pledged Him my allegiance because of what He did for me?

If the answer to that is "yes!", then you are righteous. The sin you inherited from Adam, and the death you inherited from Adam, and all the sins you have ever committed, and all the sins you will ever commit....they were all paid for by your Savior on a cross 2,000 years ago. In His eyes, your sins are gone. You are righteous.

If the answer to that is "no...", then you are unrighteous. You are still carrying your own sins and your awful punishment of death on your own shoulders...and verses 8 and 9 of I Thessalonians 1 are a description of what is waiting for you:

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the LORD and from the majesty of His power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you."

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If the answer to that is “no...but I want it to be yes”, then you are ready to get rid of that sin you have been carrying around. Bow before Jesus Christ and thank Him for dying for you. Place your life in His hands. And rise to your feet a righteous person. Nothing would bring more joy to the Father-heart of God than to be able to forever exclude you from His wrath which must someday come.

“With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.” (II Thessalonians 1:11)

So, because of the absolute surety that God will someday judge every unbeliever in the world, what do believers feel compelled to do...and how does Paul pray for these Thessalonican believers?

Since there is hope that an unrighteous person does not have to stay that way, the answer to this question is pretty obvious: believers in Jesus Christ are consumed with the desire to tell our unbelieving friends that they don't have to die. We are compelled by God's own spirit within us to tell people about Jesus. To tell our own stories. To go and tell...we are prompted by faith.

Paul prays, in this verse, that as believers go and tell the LORD Himself will bring the wonderful gift of salvation to the unrighteous, fulfilling our good purposes, and bringing to a miraculous conclusion our acts of faith.

This is a good time to make a practical application. What do you feel compelled to do?

“We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the LORD Jesus Christ.” (II Thessalonians 1:12)

The name of Jesus Christ is glorified when you and I are compelled to go and tell. When a Sunday school teacher teaches a class of one.... when someone volunteers to complete a team of people at a church camp...when a teenager lives for Christ in front of high school friends... One by one people believe in Jesus and are moved from the masses of people deserving God's judgment....to the masses of people free forever from death. And Jesus gets the glory. He's the One Who made it happen. Yes, He is going to judge the world someday. Until then, there's time for acts of faith.

II Thessalonians
Chapter 1
Questions for Personal Study and Discussion

1. (:1&2) Is there any difference between the greeting in II Thessalonians and the greeting in I Thessalonians (:1)?

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2. (:3-5) What three things does Paul see in their lives that assures him they are doing OK, even in the midst of their suffering?
- a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. (:6-10) Someday the LORD will pay back the unrighteous for their unbelief and their sin, and for everything they have done to the righteous. Here are a few verses to look up – see what they say about a coming judgment of the world:

Job 21:30

Psalms 50:3

Psalms 96:13

Ezekiel 18:20

Matthew 13:41-49

Luke 12:2

Hebrews 9:27

II Peter 3:10

Jude 14&15:

Rev. 11:18

Rev. 20:11-15

These verses have to raise three questions in our minds:

1. What do we mean by “judge”?
 2. How could a loving God do that?
 3. Am I unrighteous or righteous in God’s eyes – how do I know?
4. (:11) So, because of the absolute surety that God will someday judge every unbeliever in the world, what do believers feel compelled to do...and how does Paul pray for these Thessalonian believers?
5. What do you feel compelled to do?
6. (:12) When you do what you feel compelled to do, what happens?

II Thessalonians Chapter 2: 1-12 “Love the Truth”

I can't even remember all the couples who have married during our years in ministry. But, I can tell you just from the little glimpses I got to have of their lives as they first met, and then knew they were in love....you have a huge desire to spend time with the one you love.

Is there anything as amazing as two completely different people from different families, with different backgrounds, on two entirely different paths....suddenly waking up to the fact that they have met the most wonderful person in the world? All they can think of at that point is: I have get to know this person. They talk on the phone for hours. they go out on dates and stay out way too late because they get to talking and forget what time it is. They share stories from their pasts. They share dreams for the future. They write letters. They are hungry, hungry, hungry to know each other better.

Please hold that thought until we get to the end of this lesson, because there's something I want to see you fall in love with...

Let's review a minute: In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, they were confused about something which had to do with end times...what was it?

“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Thess. 4:13-15)

The Thessalonians had somehow gotten the mistaken notion that those believers in Jesus who had already died were going to miss out on the Lord's return.

Paul set them straight by letting them know that believers in Jesus who had already died were actually going to get there before the ones who were alive...they would be re-united with their bodies, then re-united with Jesus in the air...,then they would be with Jesus waiting to meet those who were alive at that moment when the last trump sounded.

Well now, as we enter chapter 2 of II Thessalonians, Paul has yet another false rumor to put to rest concerning the return of the Lord:

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or

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letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.” (:1&2)

Now the Thessalonians are confused because they think the Day of the Lord has already arrived. It looks like someone, perhaps in a forged letter supposedly from Paul, had told them that.

Why would the Thessalonians have been upset by the thought that the Day of the Lord had already come?

In the first letter to the Thessalonians Paul had given them the promise that they had not been “appointed to suffer wrath...”

“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Thess. 5:9)

And remember, the Day of the Lord is the time of God pouring His wrath out on the world. So if they were already in the Day of the Lord, then they were suffering God’s wrath...and thus, they would also be questioning everything Paul had ever told them, since he promised them they would not be suffering God’s wrath...and that would mean they would also be doubting their salvation, since it was Paul’s word they believed when he told them about Jesus and about the gift of salvation.

The people who had decided to spread this untruth were really doing a job on the Thessalonians. There’s probably nothing worse in the world than to build your life on what you believe is true, and then have someone shake your foundations by telling you it isn’t. There is only one solution for this – truth.

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come, until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.” (:3)

So Paul reminds them about 2 things which have to happen first, before the Day of the Lord comes:

- a. A rebellion – or, literally, a “falling away”.
Many have said that this “falling away” is describing a great time of departure from truth right before the Day of the Lord.

I personally wonder, though, if this “falling away” is not describing something mentioned in verse 7, a little further ahead. In verse 7 we are told that someone is keeping evil under control until a specific time in the future...when that person is “taken out of the way”, and evil is allowed to reign for a time. I wonder if the term “falling away” here in verse 3 is referring to someone being “taken away”, or “removed”, so that satan can throw his best at the world, and then, of course, be defeated in the end.

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Either way you look at this verse, it is obvious that great evil is given amazing freedom right before the Day of the Lord.

b. a “man of lawlessness” will be revealed

As soon as this “rebellion”, or “taking away” takes place, then the world will suddenly realize that the person they have been following as a great savior is actually quite the opposite.

The man of lawlessness is also known by several other names in scripture:

1. Daniel 9:26 – the ruler that will come
2. Daniel 8:9 – the small horn
3. Daniel 11:21 – a contemptible person
4. Daniel 11:31 (& Matthew 24:15) – the one who set up the “abomination that causes desolation”
5. Daniel 11:36 – the king
6. Zechariah 11:16&17 – the worthless shepherd
7. Revelation– the beast
8. I Jn. 2:18 - Anti-christ

Yep. This is the guy. The worst, most powerful evil man to ever walk on the face of the earth. The man who is indwelt by satan. The man who persecutes the Jews and true believers in Jesus. The one who fools the whole world into thinking he has the answers for every conceivable problem...and then surprises them with the truth.

How and when will the world know for sure who the man of lawlessness is?

“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God, or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” (:4)

Daniel 9:27 tells us: *“He (Anti-Christ) will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”* (parentheses added)

The world knows who this evil man is when he breaks his own 7-year covenant with Israel, puts an end to the sacrifices he had made it possible for the Jews to conduct on the Temple Mount, and sets up some sort of throne for himself there – demanding to be worshipped as God! He does this, according to Daniel, right at the mid-point, or, 3 ½ years into a 7-year covenant.

And we know, since we have the book of Revelation to look at as well as the Old Testament, that the “man of lawlessness”, the “beast”, will be given the freedom to do his evil thing for 42 months – or 3 ½ years...the 2nd half of that 7-year covenant

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mentioned in Daniel 9:27. *“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty two months.”* (Rev. 13:5)

So both the Old and New Testaments agree...and II Thessalonians 2:4 confirms...the world will know for sure who the man of lawlessness is when he sets himself up in God's temple, claiming to be God...3 ½ years into the last 7 years.

Now that would be hard to miss. The Thessalonians knew that they hadn't heard of that happening...and even in the days before CNN, word about that major of a happening would have traveled to them. No, Thessalonians, the Day of the Lord hasn't arrived yet.

Now...they might want to know....What is keeping satan from bringing the man of lawlessness on the scene whenever he wants to?

“Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.” (:5-7)

From these verses it would seem that there is a “restrainer”. Someone who is keeping all this evil in check until God says it's time. Someone who will obediently “step aside” when God gives the word.

Does that give you any peace, my Thessalonian friends? Do you see from that truth that there isn't any time when our Lord is not totally in charge? Even satan, that strong and powerful angel, just simply moves where God wishes him to move, and stops when God wishes him to stop.

God has **never not** been in charge.

From verse 7, it looks like there is a specific “someone” who is holding satan back from his evil plans...who is it?

I have heard two different ideas in answer to this question. I lean more to the second answer myself:

First, there are those who say that the Holy Spirit is the One who is restraining evil in the world, and always has. This theory says that as the church is removed from the world in the rapture (assuming the rapture happens before the 3 ½ year mark...because this “restrainer” has to be removed before the 3 ½ year mark), then the Holy Spirit is also removed, thus, “taken out of the way”, and leaving the doors open for evil to be in charge.

The second view says that the archangel Michael, the protector of the nation of Israel, has been standing guard over Israel since the time of Abraham. First, guarding the precious seed of the Messiah as it traveled through the years to the time of Christ. And

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then, guarding the “apple of God’s eye”, the Jewish nation, from total extinction, because God has promised to return to a believing nation of Israel someday.

Daniel 12:1 seems to indicate that there will be a time when Michael will “step aside” from that job of protecting the Jews, and that then a time of terrible trouble will fall on the Jewish people. *“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise (stand aside). There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.” (Daniel 12:1)*

It makes sense to me that this time of Michael “stepping aside” from his protecting role of Israel is probably the “taking out of the way” talked about here in II Thessalonians 2:5-7.

Again, though, whether this is Holy Spirit being talked about here, or the Archangel Michael, there is no doubt at all about Who is in charge. God, and only God.

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accord with the work of satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.” (:8-10a)

If you go back from verse 4 all the way through verse 10a, here are all the things we learn will be true of the anti-christ when he is finally allowed to do what he wants to do.

- a. :4 He exalts himself above God
- b. :4 He demands to be worshipped as God
- c. :6&7 He is held in check by God
- d. :8 He will be overthrown by the breath of Jesus
- e. :9 He will display miracles, signs, wonders
- f. :10 He will display every possible sort of deceptive evil

Hmmm....not such a scary being, after all. Just evil. And lying. And powerful. Jesus will only have to breathe on him...and he’s gone.

After reading these next verses, I have a question: Is it fair that people are deceived by the man of lawlessness...and therefore receive God’s condemnation?

“...They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (:10b-12)

And look, too, at Revelation 14:9-11: *“...if anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the Holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no*

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rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name,”

If God sends these people a “powerful delusion, so that they will believe the lie” (:11), then how can they be blamed for making the mistake of following the man of lawlessness?

But look who it is to whom God is sending this powerful delusion: *“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” (II Thessalonians 2:10b)... and “...have delighted in wickedness” (II Thessalonians 2:12b)*

Those who all along had refused to love the truth...who stubbornly clung to love of sin...who hated and condemned those who stood for the truth...those are the ones to whom God sends the delusion. They are not innocent and deceived. They are guilty and deceived. They didn't love the truth.

Application: If you could somehow know for sure that the man of lawlessness was going to be set free to do his evil work in the near future, what would you do to prepare? Our natural reaction to this question might be: run and hide. Or stock up on canned goods and peanut butter. But the simple, peaceful, strong and right answer is: love the truth.

Remember where we started this lesson? Talking about falling in love, and all the things you want to do with the one you love? If you are going to love the truth, then learn the Bible. Memorize verses. Bend the knee in front of the One Who spoke the Words in the Bible. Be hungry, hungry, hungry to know the words of Jesus better. Love the truth. When the man of lawlessness appears, we will want to be head over heels in love with the truth.

II Thessalonians
Chapter 2:1-12
Questions for Personal Study and Discussion

1. In Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, they were confused about something which had to do with end times. (I Thess. 4:13-15)
 - a. What was it?
 - b. What did Paul tell them about it?
2. (:1&2) Now the Thessalonians are confused about something else which has to do with end times.
 - a. What is it?
 - b. Why are they confused about it?

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3. Why would the Thessalonians have been upset by the thought that the Day of the Lord had already come? (I Thess. 5:9)
4. (:3) What two things does Paul tell them have to happen first, before the Day of the Lord comes?
 - a.
 - b.
5. (:4) The man of lawlessness is also known by several other names in scripture:
 - a. Daniel 9:26 – the ruler that will come
 - b. Daniel 8:9 – the small horn
 - c. Daniel 11:21 – a contemptible person
 - d. Daniel 11:31 (& Matthew 24:15) – the one who set up the “abomination that causes desolation”
 - e. Daniel 11:36 – the king
 - f. Zechariah 11:16&17 – the worthless shepherd
 - g. Revelation– the beast
 - h. Anti-christ

(:4) How and when will the world know for sure who the man of lawlessness is? (Daniel 9:27 & Revelation 13:5)
6. (:5-8) What is keeping satan from bringing the man of lawlessness on the scene whenever he wants to?
7. (:7) It looks like there is a specific “someone” who is holding satan back from his evil plans...any idea who that is? (suggestion: Daniel 12:1)
8. (:4-10a) Name all the things which will be true of the anti-christ when he is finally allowed to do what he wants to do.
 - a. :4
 - b. :4
 - c. :6&7
 - d. :8
 - e. :9
 - f. :10
9. (:10b-12) Is it fair that people are deceived by the man of lawlessness...and therefore receive God’s condemnation because they follow him? (see also Revelation 14:9-11)
10. If you could somehow know for sure that the man of lawlessness was going to be set free to do his evil work in the near future, what would you do to prepare? (hint: read :10b again)

II Thessalonians Chapter 2:13-3:18 “Everything’s OK...now Get Going”

Did you ever wish you were adopted? I don't mean that you thought you'd been given a bum rap with the family you were born into and wished you could be adopted out of it. I mean...did you ever wonder what it would feel like to actually have been “chosen”? To have been a baby or a young child who was parent-less, and then have had a loving couple see you, want you, and choose you to be their very own. Choose you because they saw something in you they just couldn't resist?

Maybe you were adopted, and you know that feeling. But for the many of us who were not, there still is a way to experience that sense of “chosen-ness”. Because, as this passage is about to tell us, we were “chosen” by God.

“But we ought always to thank god for you, brothers loved by the LORD, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” (II Thessalonians 2:13)

He chose us to be saved. Chose us because He saw something in us He just couldn't resist. In fact, He was willing to die on a cross so that we could be His. The book of Revelation says that our names were written in a book belonging to Jesus...a book full of names of people who would someday choose to worship Jesus above all else... long before the world was even created. “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8)

We were actually chosen by our adoptive parent, Jesus, even before we breathed our first breath. He chose us not just because of who we were, but because He saw who we could be...who we would be...once we placed our faith in Him. “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” (Ephesians 1:4)

Now that feels special. And that's not all.

“He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our LORD, Jesus Christ.” (II Thessalonians 2:14)

If I am reading this right, this verse is saying we were chosen by the LORD, and then once we were ready, we were called to respond to Him so that someday we could

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stand alongside of Him and share in His glory! That's way beyond special. That's undeserved and unbelievable and beyond my understanding.

But here we are. It's true. What should my response be?

“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.” (II Thessalonians 2:15)

Again I am blown away by the magnitude of this. Just stand firm. Hold to the truth you have been given. OK, Jesus, if You help me, I commit in my heart that I will stand firm. I will hold to the truth you have given me. I will not be moved.

“May our LORD Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.” (II Thessalonians 2:16&17)

Honestly, tears come to my eyes as I realize that on top of being chosen, and on top of His wanting me to share in His glory, He also is going to encourage me and strengthen me to do and to speak. There are no words in my head to describe my longing to see His face when I get even this tiniest glimpse of Who He is. And how safe I am.

All I can do is walk out my front door and tell someone else about Him. All I can do is go. I'm OK. I have no fear of going.

To finish up Chapter 2 I'd like to tell you of the many ways people I have known have done just that...they have gone. They have known that they are safely tucked within the loving arms of the One who chose them, and so they have “gone”.

A young waitress hosted a breakfast at her apartment for the people she worked with. She told her friends that she was inviting her Pastor to join this breakfast group and answer any questions they may have about God. They came.

Public School Teachers pray for the students they know are sharing their faith in Christ. And they pray for the students they know are walking in darkness. They pray that a believing student will find them and witness to them. They realize with a great sense of responsibility that they may be the only one praying for some of their students.

Many have started Bible Studies at their places of employment. They have spread the word through word of mouth, or by e-mail – some have led those studies themselves, others have brought in a friend who will lead the study.

A young single career woman offered rooms in her home to a friend in need. She lived the Gospel in front of her friend and her children day by day. They spoke

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often together of Christ. They prayed together before meals. Her friend accepted Christ as her LORD and Savior.

Some have started Bible Studies in their neighborhoods. People they didn't even know have come. One of the gals who did this had just lost her husband to a sudden heart attack. Her neighbors who knew and loved her came to this study simply because they wanted to be sure she was OK. They stayed to learn and grow and find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Another woman at Southside started a Bible study in her home because she had a parent living with her, and wanted to give her to attend the study and have a chance to grow in the LORD, too. She did.

As a second career, one woman opened up a business..a Scrapbook store – where people linger and talk – and sometimes scrapbook in order to recover from serious loss – and they want to talk about it to someone – and she had many, many chances to recommend Jesus, who can meet all needs.

A young newspaper writer had lunch every week with a co-worker - and began to present the claims of Christ to someone who otherwise would never even have considered them. That co-worker came to know Christ as Savior and today teaches Bible classes, himself, at his church.

Others have not had the words to speak eloquently of Christ...they have simply told someone about the church they go to...and offered to meet them there.

A Child-care giver talked about the Lord with the parents of the kids she provided child-care for. As those kids became a part of her life, she was able to talk along the way about the things she was learning from a Personal God.

A young mom started a Bible Study with old friends from High School. They talked about common memories and new common interests – and talked about the difference a relationship to Jesus has made since High School.

Another young mom walks every morning in her neighborhood. Saying hi to everyone. Asking where they live – telling them where she lives. Asking where they go to church. Telling them where she goes to church. Being open to hearing about their lives...and willing to share about her life with Jesus.

Someone else offers to help an elderly neighbor with cooking or finances or trips to the doctor. As they travel together she looks for opportunities to comment that she knows many people are afraid to die. If they are (who isn't?) then she can talk about the peace you have knowing you are going to see Jesus when you die.

A worker in a salon gets into conversations with co-workers about how to have a relationship to God...in fact, most people don't have any idea that God wants to

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have a relationship to us – and show them Psalms 139 – awesome Psalm about the intimate knowledge our God has of each one of us.

A young college student had a roommate who didn't know the Lord, but didn't know how to begin a conversation. She arranged a discussion get-together with other people in the same boat, telling them to invite their roommates, and let people know you will be discussing how to have a relationship to God. It worked. People came. It gave many of them courage to pursue those conversations over the weeks and months to come.

Many invite friends to lunch – and make it a point to ask them if they know for sure they are going to heaven when they die. Does it seem like it would be hard to get those words out? It is. But as soon as you do, you get the chance to tell that friend that you do know you are going to heaven when you die, and why you know that.

A school teacher sang a solo in church and invited her students to come.

A young mom got a part-time job in a gym. As she works with people who are working out, she takes the opportunity to talk about the Person who helped her the most with the imperfections in your life. Jesus. The One who is sufficient for every need we have in life.

Another woman knows her neighbors well, and prays with them when tragedy strikes.

A doctor prays with her patients in the hospital.

An older friend had a stroke. She went through therapy, and then moved temporarily to her relative's home and there she was a living witness to people even when she was at her weakest.

A man faithfully visited his Mom in the nursing home, making friends with the other people there, too. He continued to visit those new friends long after his Mom was home with Jesus.

Restaurant owners started a lending library for their employees. They stocked it with great books about the Bible and about the Lord, and with tapes from the Sunday sermons at church. The library was well-used.

A woman got a job sitting with patients at a hospital. Many patients have no family or friend to sit with them during long hospital stays, and hospitals hire people to do just that. She sometimes read the paper, sometimes a good book, while sitting quietly in hospital rooms, and sometimes brought along a Bible and offered to read out loud to patients during their good times.

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A man was a day-in-day-out witness to his family as he sat by his father's bedside and told him of the love of Jesus over and over again in the days before he died.

A Jewish believer in Jesus lovingly invite his Jewish family to attend his Jewish/Christian wedding – to give them the unparalleled opportunity to see the fulfillment of the Jewish Messiah in the person of Jesus.

An architect takes a Mission trip and washes the feet of young hoodlums in Nicaragua, as he explains his own grief over not being able to pass on the good news of Jesus to his own children.

I literally could tell one hundred more stories like these...stories of people who have learned what it is to be safely held in the arms of Christ...and then have gone...

“Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the LORD may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the LORD is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the LORD that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the LORD direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.” (II Thessalonians 3:1-5)

If you know someone who is “going”...this passage will tell you how to pray for them.

“In the name of the LORD Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

“We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the LORD Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.”

“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.” (II Thessalonians 3:6-15)

Does it seem to you that I sort of “sped” through these verses, not making comments? I did. I think they can be most effectively taken all as one lump message from Paul...and that message is: Go! Don't sit around and talk to each other about Jesus. Don't sit around at all. Work. Go. Earn your living and talk about Jesus. Go. If he had kicked them in the seat of the pants it couldn't have been any clearer.

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“Now may the LORD of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The LORD be with all of you. I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.”
(II Thessalonians 3:16&17)

Just a little nudge here from Paul to a group of people who had been spooked more than once about things they thought Paul had said, or they thought Paul had written...when really he hadn't. Paul is telling them...look for my own handwriting on any letter you receive...then you will know it is from me.

“The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you all.” (II Thessalonians 3:18)

Paul's usual ending. Always remembering that the grace of Jesus is what chose us, called us, brought us to this point, and will enable us to do what we must do until He returns.

II Thessalonians
Chapter 2:13-3:18
Questions for Personal Study and Discussion

1. (2:13) Who seeks who? Does God first seek us...or do we first seek God?
(see John 6:44 & 45)
2. (:13) When did God decide to seek us?
3. (:13) What means does God use to seek us?
4. (:14) What purpose did God have in mind for us when he decided to seek us?
5. (:15) Because of all that (above) we and the Thessalonians are admonished to _____
_____ and _____
6. (:16) Who will encourage us when we need it?
7. (3:1&2) What two things does Paul ask prayer for?
 -
 -

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8. Beginning at verse 3, find all the things Paul is warning them about, or encouraging them with:

| Warnings | Encouragements |
|----------|----------------|
| :6-12 | :3 |
| :13 | :4 |
| :14-15 | :5 |
| | :16 |

9. (:6-15) Paul seems to be especially opposed to “idle-ness”. “If a man does not work, he shall not eat.” What do you suppose he meant by this?

10. What did you learn about God in these closing verses of II Thessalonians?

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**Inductive Study
II Thessalonians
Chapter 2:13-3:18**

If you'd like to, you can choose to do a short inductive Bible Study on this passage:

For today's lesson you will need:

- A pen
- 2 colored markers
- A printed-out copy of today's passage
- Something to hard to write on

- Let's organize this passage into three segments:
 1. You were chosen by God to be where you are today (2:13-17)
 2. Here's how you can pray for us...and why (3:1-5)
 3. Don't be lazy (3:6-18)
 - ✓ Show segment divisions with a mark of some kind.
 - ✓ Find a key verse in each of these segments. Underline it.
 - ✓ Find all the things Paul is warning them about, and mark with colored marker,
 - ✓ Find the places where Paul is encouraging them, and mark with colored marker
 - ✓ Discuss each of these segments in your group and come up with an application statement (for instance: this passage says we were chosen by God, therefore I will do this:)

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II Thessalonians 2:13 – 3:18

Chapter 2

¹³But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you^[a] to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings^[b] we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

¹⁶May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Chapter 3

¹Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ²And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. ³But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. ⁴We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. ⁵May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

⁶In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching^[c] you received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

¹¹We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. ¹³And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

¹⁴If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. ¹⁵Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

¹⁷I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.