

2 Thessalonians

Who, When, Where

Written by Paulus (Paul). Paulus was originally a fanatical Pharisee, persecuting, imprisoning, and even killing Christians for teaching what he thought was heresy, that Yeshua was the Anointed, (The Jewish Messiah). After meeting Yeshua in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus, Paulus became not just a Christian but one of Christianity's most fervent preachers and teachers. He spent most of his life as an itinerant missionary, with all the life threatening perils that that brought with it, to the towns and cities which lay along the route between Jerusalem and Rome. Paulus died in Rome somewhere in the 60'sAD, and he wrote most of the letters which we have in the New Testament. Some scholars think it wasn't Paulus who wrote this, because they think he's contradicting himself with what he says here about the second coming. But they agree that it sounds like him. And in my view, it's not even contradictory.

And either way, it's full of good advice.

If it was him, it was probably written not too long after 1 Thessalonians. So early to mid AD50s.

And if, as I assume is correct, Paulus wrote this letter it was probably written while he was still in Corinth.

Summary

When does your responsibility for your children end?

How about for your disciples?

How off track do they have to be before you'll say something?

Do ever you wish one of your mentors had spoken up sooner when you went off course in your Christian life?

Before You Read

What do you do when you get fake news?

How good are you at realising it's fake before you panic?

How bad does someone have to be before you won't hang out with them any more?

How about your church? Have they ever kicked anyone out? How judgemental are they?

Do you think they're overreacting or protecting the congregation?

Key Verses

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

We ought to give thanks to God at all times concerning you brothers, just as it's deserved, because your faith overabounds, and the love of each one of you all abounds to one another, so that we ourselves are boasting of you among the assemblies of God, on behalf of your perseverance, and your faith in all your persecutions, and the duress which you're tolerating

Does that sound like your church?

Overabounding in faith. Abounding in love for one another.

And on top of that, this is in hard times - perseverance in persecutions and duress.

Why isn't your church like that? Does it need some hard times?

What can you personally do to change your church?

How about inviting them, a few at a time, to a meal at your house. Once a week. Get them to know each other.

Try to pick people from two different groups in the church each time, so they get to have a meal with people they don't usually hang out with.

2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

They'll pay the penalty of everlasting ruin, away from the presence of the lord, and from the glory of his strength, on that day when he comes, to be glorified among his holy ones, and to be marvelled at by all those who trust, because our testimony was trusted by you.

They, (the ones persecuting you now), will one day pay for what they're doing. Let Yahweh worry about that, you just get on with living in a way which glorifies him.

2 Thessalonians 2:1

And we ask you brothers, concerning the arrival of our lord Yeshua the Anointed, and our being gathered together to him, that you don't be quickly unsettled in your mind, nor be troubled, neither because of a spirit, nor because of a message, nor because of a letter, appearing to be from us, saying that the day of the Anointed has already been.

Fake news! 2,000 years ago.

It's not just a modern thing after all. Although it's way more common now with social media.

So the Thessalonians got the fake news and thought it was real. They thought they had somehow missed out on the second coming and had been left behind. Devastating.

But just like most fake news, if you're saying, "Oh no, that can't be true!", or you're just overcome with massive fear, especially FOMO Fear Of Missing Out... That is a huge indicator that it's fake news trying to manipulate you. Check the facts. And stick to the facts.

Just like in this case. It wasn't true.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Don't let anybody deceive you in any way, because unless the defection comes first, and the person of sin is revealed, the son of destruction, the one who opposes and exalts himself above everything which is called a god, or is an object of worship, so that he sits as a god in the temple of God, displaying himself — that he's a god.

So here are the facts. Which Paulus says he told them before when he was with them, face to face... and now they're panicking and not sticking to the facts.

First there will be a defection, a falling away... presumably of the church. It seems to be happening now. And if the church is persecuted for standing against homosexuality, and gender, and the rights of parents... how many will stand up and be persecuted? How many will just stop being part of church altogether?

And then we will see the one who opposes all religious ideas and teaching... will sit himself in the temple of God. Sometimes called the "antichrist", particularly in the letters of Yohannes (John).

And we haven't seen that yet either.

So they were wrong, it hadn't already come, and they hadn't missed out.

And now we can still see that neither of those has happened, so it's still in the future, but feels like it really won't be long now. I honestly believe it will be in my lifetime, and I'm already getting old.

Also, about 20 years after 2 Thessalonians was written the temple was destroyed. So either temple here is now the church, or the physical temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. (I know many groups want that to happen and are working to make it a reality, so it's definitely possible).

2 Thessalonians 2:8

For the secret of lawlessness is already working, only now there's one who holds him back, until he comes out from the midst.

The most likely "one who holds him back" seems to be the holy spirit. But when he is taken away, (the rapture), there will be nothing left to hold the lawless one back and the end will come.

Paulus also reminds them here, that Yeshua will destroy him with just the breath of his mouth. It won't be a close fight. It won't even be a competition. Yeshua will show up and the fight will be over before it begins.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

... whose arrival is in accordance with the working of Satan, in all power, and signs and miracles of falsehood, and in all deception of unrighteousness among those who are being destroyed because they didn't welcome the love of the truth — so they'd be saved.

Satan can orchestrate miracles too. And he will, in deception and unrighteousness, to bring the person of lawlessness into power. And those who have rejected Yeshua's love will be destroyed. God will let it happen because they rejected his truth, and this is the consequence.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

And we instruct you brothers, in the name of our lord Yeshua the Anointed, to withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks in a disorderly way, and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

Not that we should become isolationist, or sitting in judgement of every other Christian for anything they do wrong. Look down to verse 15 where he says, "Don't regard them as an enemy, but admonish them like a brother".

If they're not living as a loving, holy living, unified church, and teaching salvation through Yeshua alone... How are they even Christian?

2 Thessalonians 3:7-10

For you yourselves know how you must imitate us, that we weren't disorderly among you. Neither did we eat bread with anyone without paying, but in trouble and labour, working night and day, in order not to overburden any of you. Not that we don't have a right, but so that we ourselves might give you a model, in order that you'd imitate us. For even when we were with you we gave you this instruction, that if anyone isn't willing to work, don't let them eat.

We see this over and over in the letters to the Thessalonians. Paulus and co modelled how to live in front of them. Not just teaching words, but showing them. This is how we should be to our disciples too. That is why I always push for you to be involved in their lives, not just having a 2 hour study once a week.

And this particular warning about freeloaders. It's true, when people find out someone is handing out charity, they put their hands out to get it. Even if they have to make up a story which isn't true.

Be discerning. Some people totally need charity. Others are just self focused and lazy.

2 Thessalonians 3:11

For we hear that some are walking among you disorderly, not working but being busybodies.

Being busybodies instead of being busy bodies.

Isn't it true, that when people are idle, they turn to gossip. It's like they have nothing better to do, and they're bored, so they spread gossip to make their life more exciting.

Avoid gossip. Period. Even the juicy stuff. Even if it's probably true.

Sadly I find a lot of gossipers even at church, during the tea and coffee session after church. I find it's best to just walk away.

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

Would you have panicked if you'd been a Thessalonian back then and heard of a letter from Paulus which was saying you missed the second coming?

Of course, if it WAS from Paulus, and you HAD missed the second coming... then so did he right! Otherwise he wouldn't have been able to write the letter.

Now that you've read this letter. Is there anyone you know who fit's Paulus' description of someone you should no longer have anything to do with?

What are you going to do about it?