

NAME

Laney:

The title of the epistle is taken from the addresses, the church of the Thessalonians. This letter is the logical sequel to First Thessalonians and is designated "Second" Thessalonians to distinguish it from Paul's previous epistle to the church.

AUTHOR

Laney:

Pauline authorship of Second Thessalonians is evidenced both by internal and external evidence. Paul claims to have authored the epistle (1:1; 3:17) and the authenticity of the letter was recognized by Irenaeus (c. 170 A.D.). The letter was included both in the Canon of Marcion and the Muratorian List.

The attack upon the Pauline authorship of the epistle arose in the 19th century. First, it is argued that the apostle Paul would not have written two letters with such marked similarities within such a short time. Second, it is believed that Paul's teaching concerning the Lord's return is too different to be from the same author as the first epistle. Third, the man of lawlessness (2:30) is not mentioned elsewhere in Paul's epistles, and so it could not be genuine here. Fourth, it is alleged that the tone of the two epistles is too different to have been authored by the same individual.

The objections to Pauline authorship of Second Thessalonians are based on internal evidence, none of which possess real substance in light of the certainty of the earliest Christians as to the genuineness of the epistle. Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are associated with Paul in writing the epistle as they were associated with him in ministering to the church.

DATE

Written in Corinth circa 51 A.D.

Laney:

Since Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were still together when the epistle was written, it is probable that the second epistle was written from Corinth not long after the composition of First Thessalonians. The close connection between the two epistles makes it unlikely that a long interval occurs between them. It is generally held that two or three months elapsed between the writing of the two letters. In harmony with the date of First Thessalonians (early summer 51 A.D.), Second Thessalonians may be dated in the summer of 51 A.D.

THEME

Halley (page 44): *"The Lord's Second Coming"*

Mitchell: *"The Day of the Lord and Christ's Return"*

Mitchell: *"The blessed Hope is a Practical Hope"*

In the first letter Paul concentrated on that aspect of Christ's return commonly called the rapture. The time when Christ would come to snatch away His church. But in this second letter his emphasis is upon that aspect of the Lord's return that pertains to His being revealed to all the

world at the close of the tribulation. At that time He will defeat the Antichrist and set up His kingdom.

Laney: *“Corrections Concerning the Day of the Lord”*

Mitchell:

Three clear cut purposes seem to be in the mind of the apostle as he pens this letter:

1. Comfort: The epistle was intended to commend the believer's growth in faith and love (1:3) and to encourage their continued steadfastness under severe and growing persecution (1:4-12).
2. Correction: The primary purpose of the epistle is to instruct the believers concerning the Day of the Lord (2:1-15) and to correct the misconception of the believers that the Day of the Lord had arrived. Apparently false teachers claiming to have Paul's teaching had persuaded the believers that they were presently in the Day of the Lord (2:2). In response to this teaching some had given up their work and were living in idleness (3:6-12), apparently waiting for the Lord's return.
3. Condemnation: To rebuke the conduct of the idle and disorderly (3:6-12) who were abusing the doctrine of Christ's immanent return.

Key Word (Nelson's): Understanding the Day of The Lord - The theme of this epistle is understanding the day of the Lord and the resulting lifestyle changes.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

“Not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.” (2 Thessalonians 2:2,3)

“May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.” (2 Thessalonians 3:5,6)

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 2 - The second chapter is written to correct the fallacious teaching that the Day of The Lord has already come upon the Thessalonian church.

A comparison of emphases in 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Nelson's - pages 281,283):

Second Thessalonians is the theological sequel to First Thessalonians. Not long after receiving 1 Thessalonians from Paul, some of the Thessalonian believers fell prey to false teaching, thinking the final day of the Lord had already begun. Paul wrote this brief letter to correct that error by pointing out that certain identifiable events will precede the final day of the Lord, and to encourage the Thessalonian believers, whose faith was being tested by persecution. The chart below notes other distinctions between the two letters.

1 Thessalonians

Addresses how the Thessalonians were evangelized as they received the Word of God

The imminency and importance of the Lord's return is emphasized

The saints are comforted and encouraged

2 Thessalonians

Addresses how the Thessalonians are being edified, noting their progress in faith, love, and patience

Misunderstandings about the Lord's return are corrected

The saints are assured of God's judgment on His Enemies

Outline:

- I. The Coming of the Lord and Comfort in Present Persecution 1
- II. The Coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord 2
- III. The Coming of the Lord and Practical Christian Living 3

RECIPIENTS

The epistle is addressed to the "church of the Thessalonians" (1:1). The believers are addressed as "brethren" (1:3; 2:1,15; 4:1) even as they are in the first epistle.

Mitchell:

Evidently Paul's first letter had given rise to further questions. Also it seems quite plain that false letters were being circulated which contended that the awesome day of the Lord had already come. This could possibly seem feasible to the Thessalonian believers because of the intense persecutions they were undergoing.

The historical background concerning the founding of the church at Thessalonica is clearly set forth in Acts 17:1-10. The immediate occasion of the writing of the second letter was a report which Paul received concerning the Thessalonians believers, brought to him perhaps by those who had delivered the first epistle.

For further information on the recipients see the discussion in the Class Notes for First Thessalonians: Recipient.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

The major doctrinal emphasis of the epistle is eschatological concerning the Second Coming and the Day of the Lord.

Unger's Bible Dictionary:

The **Day of the Lord** is the protracted period commencing with the Second Advent of Christ in glory and ending with the cleansing of the heavens and the earth by fire preparatory to the new heavens and the new earth of the eternal state (Isaiah 65:17-19; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). The Day of the Lord as a visible manifestation of Christ upon the earth is to be distinguished from the Day of Christ. The latter is connected with the glorification of the saints and their reward with Christ to inaugurate the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord thus comprehends specifically the closing phase of the Tribulation and extends through the Millennial

Kingdom. Apocalyptic judgments (Revelation 4:1-19:6) precede and introduce the Day of the Lord.

The **Day of Christ** is the period connected with reward and blessing of saints at the coming of Christ for His own. The expression occurs in 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16. In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 the Authorized Version has the Day of Christ incorrectly for the Day of the Lord. The Day of Christ is not the Day of the Lord. The latter is connected with earth judgments (Revelation 4:1-19:16), which come after the out-taking of the church, the body of Christ, and its glorification and judgment for works at the judgment seat of Christ. The Day of the Lord (Isaiah 2:12; Revelation 19:11-21) cannot occur until after the church is completed (2 Thessalonians 2:1 cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12).

Mitchell:

This letter reveals the proper attitude a Christian should maintain as he awaits the Lord's return. Our attitude should not be one of excited anticipation of some immediate catastrophe. It should not be idle star gazing. Nor should we sell everything to go camp on a mountain in Montana while drinking grape cool aid. Rather, we should be faithfully performing our duties and quietly waiting for Him.

Peculiarities:

3. This is the shortest letter addressed to a church
4. This letter has an autographed conclusion, probably because of the presence of false teachers (3:17).

RESOURCES

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Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Chicago, Illinois, Moody Press, 1966

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS - [especially those of Dr. J. Carl Laney]), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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