

Bible Study 2 Thess 2:1-17 *Leader's Guide*

1. Can you think of a time that someone tried to convince you of something about the Christian faith that you suspected or knew to be false? How did you respond?

2. **Read 2 Thess 2:1-17.** Paul had previously taught them about the Lord's return. **Read 1 Thess 4:17-5:4 and 2 Thess 1:6-8.** What was now causing them trouble about this "day of the Lord"?

New "information" ie something told them that supposedly came from Paul that called into question what he had previously told them (v.2). Someone was trying to "deceive" them (v.3).

3. Some people suggest that the "man of lawlessness" is a figure who will arise before the return of Jesus. Compare vv.3, 6 & 8 with 1:7. What does this suggest? Read also 1 John 2:7

1:7 says Jesus will "be revealed" on the Judgment day. That meant that people will see him for who he really is. It did not mean that he was not around or even active up until that day, just that it wasn't plain for all to see yet. The "man of lawlessness" seems to be some kind of counterfeit of the Lord. But he will also be revealed on the Judgment day. The parallel implies that, like Jesus, the "man of lawlessness" is also present and active in the world now, he is just not seen for who he is yet. The 'man of lawlessness' seems to refer to the devil and any who work for his agenda of trying to rob God of his glory.

4. **Read Matt 24:9-31.** What similarities do you see there with 2 Thess 2? Does this help us understand better what this passage is describing?

Matt 2 Thess

24:9-14 & 1:4; 2:1-2 Persecution, false prophets, deception, stand firm to end

24:15-22 & 2:3-4 Time of rebellion, enemy trying to take God's place NB "Temple" here most likely refers to the church

24:23-26 & 2:9-14 Time of deception, don't believe the lie

24:27-31 & 2:8 Time of Judgment, Jesus returns

Not everything parallels neatly, but you wouldn't expect that since this is using images and metaphors. But the overall idea is the same – in the time between Jesus' first coming and his return there will be opposition to God's people, false teaching, the devil at work and the priority for Christians to stand firm in the truth. Jesus will return to bring judgment and complete justice. This is a consistent theme in the NT.

5. According to this passage, why are people judged by God?

"rebellion" v3 ie rejection of God as Ruler; they refuse to love the truth (about God) v.10, they prefer the lie and delight in wickedness vv11-12. So they are culpable for their rejection of God and pursuit of a life without him.

6. Will there be a 'final showdown' between Jesus and the devil? How do you respond to this?

No. There is no contest. The devil will be destroyed by just the breath of Jesus' mouth (the gospel) and the splendour of his coming – real glory removes all pretenders v.8. This should be of amazing comfort to all Christians, especially those who are facing opposition for their faith.

7. Paul is writing to 'settle' the Thessalonians and encourage them. List the things in this passage that would do that. Which do you find particularly encouraging and why?

v.1 A reminder that they will see Jesus

v.5 Whatever trouble they are going through is not unexpected

v.6 Whatever trouble they are facing, it is no more than God allows – the devil does not have free reign

v.8 Jesus wins!

v.11 God is active even in people's rejection of him – God is sovereign and all powerful.

v.13 God loves them, chose them, sanctified them.

v.14 Their eternal future is in glory with Jesus

v.15 They have all they need to stand firm (and so do we! In the Bible)

8. Standing firm as Christians is bound up with 'holding on to the teachings' that have been passed on (v.15). What does this look like in practice? What does this look like in your life? Does anything need to change in order to truly do this?

It means taking the Bible seriously and giving full attention to it. That will mean listening carefully as the Bible is read and then explained in church (being in church regularly!). Taking time in the week to read the Bible alone or with someone else – a little regularly is always better than aspiring to something grand but never getting around to it. Not giving up in the years to come. Other practical tips can be shared – Bible on audio, podcasts and sermon downloads, home group (of course).

9. Perhaps in pairs, pray for each other using vv16-17 but in your own words.