

2 Thessalonians

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Paul and His Letters* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all th tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec-

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 perverse** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to 2 Thessalonians, paying particular attention to the *Purpose* and *Themes* of the book. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of 2 Thessalonians to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of 2 Thessalonians, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on 2 Thessalonians as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1–2.** With what two small but significant prepositions does Paul express the relationship between God and the Thessalonian Church? What does the triune God represent for Paul in connection with every spiritual blessing?
2. **1:5–10.** What do these verses provide? What is Paul's focus here?
3. **1:9.** To what does the expression "eternal destruction" refer? What is *hell* in Paul's thinking? What other New Testament ideas and images fill out this terrifying prospect?
4. **1:12.** What does Paul frequently mention in the two Thessalonian letters regarding the Father and the Son?

For application

1. **1:4–5.** Why do Christians pass around stories of groups (other than their own) that have endured hardship or persecution? Why do you think the Catholic Church takes such an interest in martyrologies (collections of stories about martyrs)?
2. **1:6–8.** As you read these verses, what tone of voice do you "hear"? Why do you think Paul would wish for divine vengeance to fall on people who do not know God? (Then again, what is "knowing God" in Paul's language?) How are failure to know God and disobedience related here?
3. **1:9.** Having considered the note for this verse, what is your own belief concerning the existence and nature of hell? What do you know of the Church's current teaching about hell and those who go there? (Refer to CCC 1033–36.) If you have difficulty with that teaching, what is the basis for the difficulty?
4. **1:11.** According to this verse, how does God fulfill our resolves and good works of faith? Why are good resolutions and good works (even ones done in faith) not enough by themselves?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:3.** What is another word for "rebellion" here? What is Paul envisioning? Who is the "man of lawlessness", also called the "son of perdition"?
2. **Word Study: Restraining (2:6).** The note points out that the term "restrain" in 2 Thessalonians is difficult to interpret. Remembering that Greek words have gender, what do the *power* (neuter) and the *person* (masculine) do? What or who have they been thought to be? Why did Paul feel no need to describe the restrainer further?
3. **2:7.** What is the "mystery of lawlessness"? Toward what is it building?
4. **2:15.** What are the "traditions" to which Paul refers? What did the traditions serve as a standard for judging? What role did Paul's personal example of Christian living serve?

For application

1. **2:3–4.** Given the events of the last hundred years, several historical figures might easily fit this description. How would you avoid letting yourself be deceived by a charismatic but devious personality? (Hint: Look ahead to verse 15.) How would you prevent others from being deceived?
2. **2:10–12.** In these verses, what sort of person will be condemned? Why? How can someone "take pleasure in unrighteousness"?
3. **2:13.** What were you chosen by God to do? When? How is this choice the opposite of what happens in the previous verse?
4. **2:14–15.** Why is it important to "hold fast" to the deposit of faith? If someone were to urge you to "question" Church teaching, what would that person actually be urging you to do? What *should* be the effect of asking questions of this deposit of faith so as to understand it better?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1–2.** For what purpose is Paul soliciting intercessory prayer from the Thessalonian Church?

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2. **3:6–15.** What embarrassing situation in the Thessalonian Church is Paul addressing? What three groups of people is he talking about? How does he urge the Church to get involved in correcting this problem?
3. **3:14.** What two purposes did Paul expect disciplinary exclusion from the life and liturgy of the Church to serve?
4. **3:17.** Why did Paul, having dictated the letter to a secretary, take up his pen and add his own signature and some personal remarks at the end?

For application

1. **3:3.** What is Paul promising you here? How does your faith both strengthen you and “guard you from evil”? Assuming he does not mean that God will prevent evil from happening, what kind of “guard” might Paul be talking about?
2. **3:6–10.** Paul seems to advocate a kind of “tough love” here. When is it appropriate to help someone who is not working, and when is it appropriate not to help such a person? How do you seek help from the Christian community when you are in trouble yourself?
3. **3:13.** Have you ever become tired of living the Christian life? What might cause such a weariness? What prompts or encourages you to “keep on keeping on”?
4. **3:14–15.** If a fellow Christian is publicly dissenting from the faith or practice of the Church, how do you treat him, not as an enemy, but as a brother? Why might Paul recommend that you avoid his company? How would you go about warning him without being sanctimonious about it?