

New Light on the Second Chapter of Second Thessalonians

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The second chapter of Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians has long been a puzzle to students of Biblical eschatology, since it seems, in our common English translation, to contradict the teaching of many other portions of the New Testament.

All through the New Testament the return of Christ is presented as the great hope of the church. Naturally this event has many phases, especially as it relates to different types of people. To demand that everything predicted in connection with Christ's return should take place in one day, or even in one decade, would be as unreasonable as to demand that all the Old Testament predictions about His first coming should have been fulfilled in one day. It would not have been beyond that power of God to have fulfilled all the Old Testament predictions of the coming of the Messiah in one day. The Almighty could have so accelerated matters that the miraculous conception of Christ, His birth at Bethlehem, His preaching in Galilee, His betrayal by Judas, His crucifixion and resurrection, could have taken place in one day, or at least in one year. Actually, however, we find these and other predictions spaced over a period of more than thirty years, and many of the O.T. predictions of Messiah's coming still await fulfillment at the second Advent. Just how close or how far apart the different phases of this latter might be, can no more be assumed without clear Biblical evidence than could have been done regarding the phases of the first Coming.

As one examines the New Testament statements, it is difficult to escape the conviction that the first recognizable phase of the Coming is the one which relates particularly to those who know Christ as Saviour and Lord. This conclusion is based not merely on some one passage, but on the oft-repeated exhortation to the Christian to be active and vigilant in view of the fact that his Lord will return ~~at a~~ <sup>time</sup> when there is no particular reason to expect Him. Over and over in the