

Reading Schedule for July 30 – August 5, 2018

I am happy that we are also going to read 2 Thessalonians as the Apostle Paul continues the theme of Christ's coming. Paul's topic of Christ's return, along with the antichrist and the signs of the end times, reminded me of the Book of Revelation. I think this is another book in the Bible that we might have overlooked. It is a good time for us to delve into the amazing message of the final book of the Bible.

July 30 - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12: “. . . on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.” (v.10) It is obvious that this verse is more uplifting than verse 9, which clearly portrays the punishment for unbelievers, compared to the rewards of believers on that day. We have already discussed the confusion about the timing of the day of the Lord. But here, Paul gives a description of that day, and the ultimate truth that Jesus will be glorified. Both the wrath of God and the reward of God are clearly portrayed in the teaching about the day of the Lord. The Apostle Paul does not want the believers in Thessalonica to be troubled about that day, but rather be motivated to fulfill their calling on earth. How do you respond to these words of instruction and challenge from the Apostle Paul?

July 31 - 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17: “Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.” (v.3) This is a very descriptive verse, clearly portraying the timing of the day of the Lord. Two events will preclude its coming. The first is recognized as “the rebellion,” which refers to a majority of people turning their back on God. This will be culminated with the arrival of the “man of lawlessness,” which we have identified as the antichrist. He will personify the very essence of rebellion and hostility to God. He is the one whose destiny is set by the prophetic word on the assurance that he will be thrown in the lake of fire with all others who reject the living God. Beginning in verse 13, we read about how we are to prepare ourselves, whether the day of the Lord comes very soon, or is still far in the distance. How are you standing firm?

August 1 - 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18: “And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.” (v.13) This is a common phrase in Paul's writings. He told the Galatians to not grow weary in well doing. This seems like a general statement, but it really does point to perseverance and endurance. I remember one person giving me the simple counsel to “do the next right thing.” No matter if we are very close to the return of Christ, or his return is somewhat in the distance, living with a passionate concern for Christ and the Gospel is the best way to prepare us for the future. Do not be lazy or apathetic could summarize Paul's concern in several of these verses. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in your life is one of engaged activity, as well as a contentment in the process. I would suggest to you that Paul wants the Thessalonians to live with passion and peace at the same time. How would you summarize what Paul is telling them?

August 2 - Revelation 1:1-8: “Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’” and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen.” (v.7) This could be understood as an introductory statement to the Book of Revelation. Jesus will come as the Son of

man in the clouds, and even those who rejected him will see it unveil. It will be clear to all that Jesus was who he said he was and is. Verse 8 can help you in your prayers of worship to the Lord. How significant is it that our God is the Alpha and the Omega? What does that mean to you? I know that phrase is translated in English as the first and the last, but how do you understand that in regards to who God is? What are your expectations as we read this book, and how are you anticipating the next 3-4 weeks in this amazing book about the close of the age?

August 3- Revelation 1:9-20: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.’” (v.17) Again it refers to Jesus being the first and the last. This is quite an account of Christ's glorious presence. It reminds me of when he is transfigured in the Gospels before Peter, James and John. What does the imagery of these verses about the Son of Man mean to you? I am reminded of the fact that the living one died to redeem my life from the pit. He was the firstborn among the dead. His name is Jesus. Because Jesus died and rose again, John can tell us that we do not need to fear. We should not fear death, because Jesus has conquered it forever. These are beautiful words about the Son of Man. The Apostle John has a vision for us that lifts Jesus up to his proper place of glory and worship. How does this inspire your worship?

August 4 - Revelation 2:1-11: “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.” (v.4) Do you remember this verse, highlighting the fact that the church in Ephesus had lost its first love? It began with an excited love for Christ, and now the Lord is revealing that the church had lost its first love. Each one of the churches is challenged by a word of rebuke from the Lord himself. But as you read through Smyrna, you will notice the absence of a rebuke. This is interesting, but also it is the shortest writing to these seven churches. However, the message to the church at Smyrna is not an easy one, because they will be tested, and he is encouraging them to be faithful until death. In the early church, it was an honor to be persecuted for Christ, and to even die. I wonder if the believers at Smyrna felt that way. How do you respond to these first two churches? Is there a sense in your life where your love for Christ has diminished? Doctrine and knowledge are no substitute for devotion and love.

August 5 - Revelation 2:12-29: “Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.” (v.20) I am contemplating the message that the Lord gives the church in Thyatira. It seems that they were tolerating false teaching. They allowed the negative influence of one called Jezebel. This could be many people, or it could focus on just one woman who is causing great trouble in the church. She needed to be confronted of her heresy, and eliminated from the church, as she was causing great damage and much confusion. It is time to bring her to discipline, but they had neglected to do so, and this brought harsh words from the Son of God, our Savior, the Lord Jesus himself. How do you respond to the message given to these two churches? What stands out to you? Why?

PRAYER: Pray that August is a month of spiritual nourishment and a deepening of passion for Christ within our body.