

Chosen and Called

Key Verse:
“Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”
—II Thessalonians 2:15

Selected Scripture:
II Thessalonians 2

that the gospel message was just beginning to be preached and the work of the present Gospel Age was only getting started. How then, they perhaps wondered, could Jesus' return and the resulting end of this Gospel Age, occur so soon?

Paul explained the matter to them, “Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (II Thess. 2:2,3) This ‘falling away’ is a time Paul spoke of prophetically in which many of the doctrines of Truth would be put aside and replaced by false teachings. A false church system would be set up and deceive many for a long period of time. Finally, though, he prophesies this was to ‘be revealed,’ and that false system to be destroyed “with the brightness of his coming [presence].” (II Thess. 2:8) All

ONE OF THE PURPOSES

Paul had for writing the second epistle to the Thessalonians was to correct an apparent misunderstanding of the timing of Jesus' return and the resulting establishment of his earthly kingdom. Evidently, some had been teaching that these events were imminent. This was confusing to the brethren because the evidences around them were

this, Paul said, must occur before the end of the Gospel Age and the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom.

Nearly two thousand years have passed since Paul penned these words, and we now see in hindsight the evidences of that 'falling away'—the Dark Ages of superstition, fear, and the many false teachings and practices which entered Christendom. We also see, however, that a great enlightenment has come upon the true church during this 'harvest' time of the Gospel Age, signaling the nearness of the destruction of this old order of things and the establishment of the true kingdom of God upon the earth. It was this that the Thessalonian brethren looked forward to, for they desired to be a part of the Christ which would then bless all the families of the earth.

Having clarified this matter concerning the relative nearness of the kingdom, Paul again encouraged the brethren. He thanked God for them, and assured them that God had chosen them to "salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (vs. 13) Notice that 'belief of the truth' was necessary, thus explaining why Paul had found it needful to correct their understanding. The Key Verse further points out the importance that those striving to follow Christ hold firm to the truths they have learned from the Scriptures. These truths do not change, although our appreciation of them increases as we grow and develop into the image of Jesus, and as we more and more appreciate the beauties of God's plans and purposes for all mankind. In all this, we are mindful of these words, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."—Isa. 55:9

Our lesson ends with Paul once again encouraging the brethren, that Jesus and God, "even our Father," might "comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (II Thess. 2:16,17) Let us be likewise stirred to faithfulness in all our words and actions, as those chosen and called of God. ■