

2 Thessalonians 2:1

Introduction

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul describes the events which will take place before Christ's return. Some of the Thessalonians were sitting around idle because they thought His return was imminent, and Paul had to address this problem. These events will be the subject of the next study, but today just looking at verse 1, the fact that the return of Christ will be the occasion of our gathering together unto Him.

The Greek word used for "gathered" *ἐπισυναγωγή* is only used on one other occasion: **Let us not give up meeting together** (Hebrews 10:25). The Lord's return is going to be a gathering together or assembling of ourselves together. This idea strikes a chord with us. Man is a social being; we do not like to be on our own. We like to be together, seeing one another's faces. It is one of the features of Christmas – gathering together. But there is often sadness attached to human get-togethers. The happiest of parties often have someone there who doesn't fit in, or whom we wish wasn't there. And our gatherings only last for a finite time. As years roll by, death makes painful gaps in the family circle. Old faces arise in our mind, and old voices sound in our ears amidst the laughter. Few speak of these things, but many feel them. There is no unmixed pleasure about any earthly gathering.

But the gathering spoken of in this verse is so different from our human ones. At this gathering there will be joy without sorrow, and mirth without tears.

Gathering together at the Lord's Return

At the end of the world when Christ returns, He will return in the clouds, visible, glorious and personal. The first thing He will do is gather His people to Him. The dead will be raised and the living will be changed. They will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Everyone belonging to Christ will be at this gathering. No one will be left behind.

This is the final reward for Christ's people. This glory is to be seen by all creation. Christ's ones will receive their crown of glory and enter into His kingdom prepared; they will go publicly into the joy of the Lord. Although God's people will have no reason to fear that gathering, the events surrounding the Parousia may be fearful for the ungodly.

It will be a great gathering of all of God's children from the very first to the last born in the day when Christ comes, from every age, nation, people and tongue. All are going to be assembled. None to be overlooked or forgotten. Weakest and feeblest not to be left behind. Though we may appear few in number, on that day the scattered ones will be gathered to be a great multitude which no man can number.

It will be a wonderful meeting. People we have never seen before we will meet. Some we may have heard about, and the majority we have never heard about. People we

have read about in the history of the church. Surprises for all. People we never expected to be there. Perhaps vice versa will be true.

It will also be a humbling gathering, marking the end of narrow mindedness and denominational bigotry. Those Christians who were exclusive and standoffish will have to mix in heaven. Party spirit and pride and unbrotherliness will be at an end.

Paul wants this gathering together is to be in our mind. All other gatherings are very unimportant in comparison.

The character of the gathering together

We ought to look forward to this with joy and expect it with pleasure. The state of things will be totally unlike our present condition. At present, God's children are scattered everywhere. We never continue long side by side. Often we feel lonely and isolated, and often we long for more fellowship with Christians. But all this is going to end.

Those who are gathered are all of one mind. There is no perfect church on this earth. Tares and wheat grow side by side. Where there are the wise, there are also the foolish. There is a Judas at every communion table, a Demas in every apostolic company. But at the Second Coming, Christ will present to the Father a perfect church without spot or wrinkle. To be of one mind and opinion. Doubts, controversies, mistakes and half-truths will all be gone. We shall know as we are known. We will see eye to eye with all others. No squabbling or discord. Graces will be fully developed. Our sins and sinful nature will be all gone.

It will be a meeting where none is absent. We will see again beloved friends and relatives who have died in Christ and left us in tears and sorrow. We will see them again, brighter and better and more beautiful than ever before. Meet all those who have fought a good fight before us. Pictures and books are the only way we know of them now, but then we will see them face-to-face. We will talk with them and be able to ask questions.

It will be a meeting without a parting. There is no such meeting now. We live in an endless hurry. The cares of the world, duties of life, demands of families, work in which we are engaged – all eat up our days. Not able to have as much fellowship as we ought with Christians. But then, “farewell” and “goodbye” will be unheard words.

It will be a world of no more sin, sorrow, poverty, anxiety, sickness, pain, old age, death, change. It will be a calm, unhurried, restful and easy existence. No wonder we are bidden to look forward to it.

Application

What is our attitude to the prospects described here – the second coming and public gathering of Christ's people? Our attitude will be an indication of the state of our hearts. If this prospect is not attractive, is such a person a Christian? Certainly a grim prospect for those who have to face partings in this life with no hope for the future of final gathering together in Christ.

The mark of the Christian is that he loves this return of Christ with the gathering of Christians also. The true Christian loves the gathering of Christians together here on earth now. So he will love it at the Second Coming. Similarly the man who is happier with the world now and finds worship a bore is unlikely to be happy then.

Our tastes on earth are sure evidence of the state of our hearts. The state of our heart is a sure indication of where we will spend life hereafter. This prospect is a call for us to be looking forward. Our good things are yet to come. Now we may think with sorrow of the departed at Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries. But the Lord's coming draws nigh, and that will be a meeting without parting, and gathering without separation. Believers laid in the grave are in good keeping. We are yet to see them again.

Do you feel lonely as the years go by, and your contemporaries are now in glory? Do you feel as if the ranks are thinning? Look up and look forward! The lonely time will soon be over. We will have company by and by. Soon to meet again, and be together forever with the Lord.