

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Introduction

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The City of Thessalonica

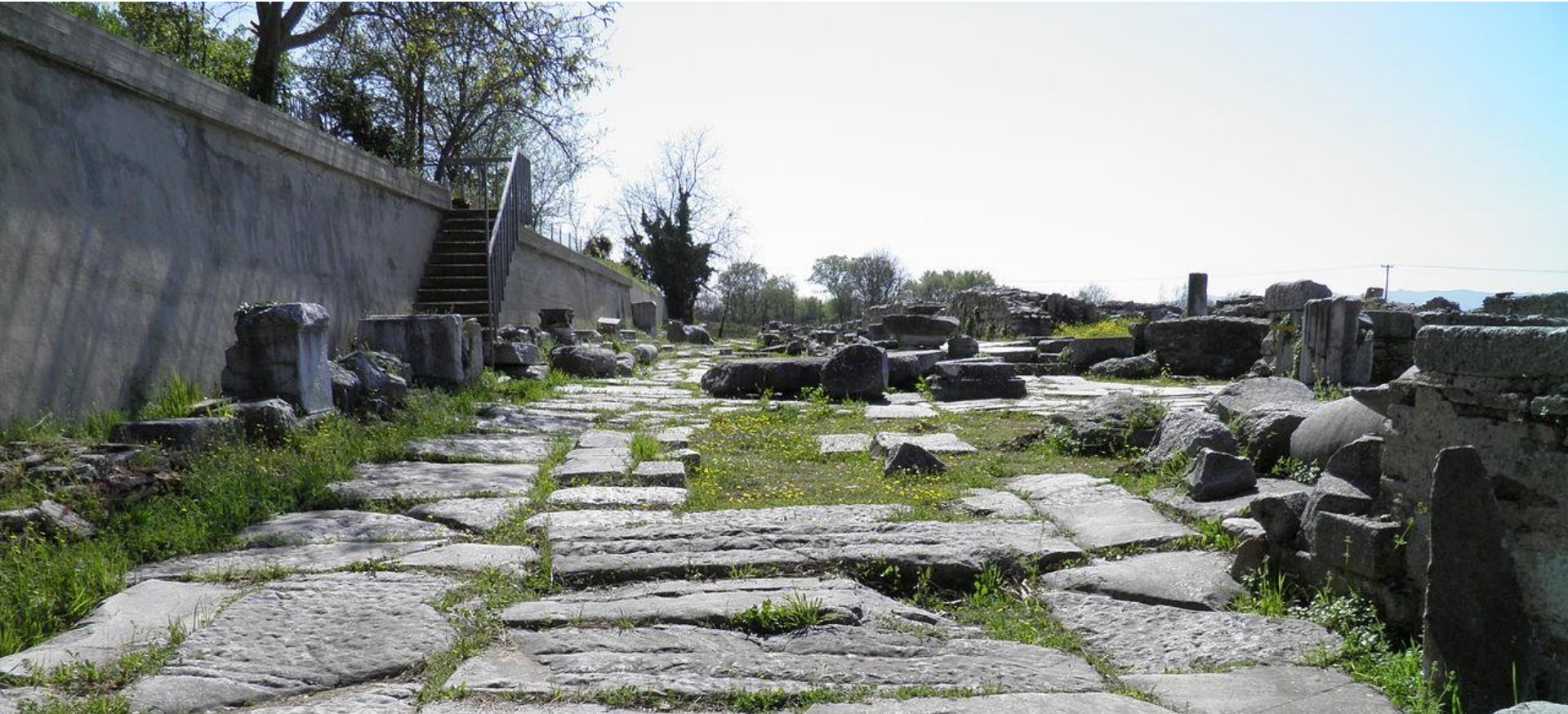
Thessalonica was founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who became king of Macedonia after the latter's death. He named the new settlement, built on the site of an older town named Therme (presumably because of nearby hot springs), after his wife, the half-sister of Alexander the Great.

Located on the Egnatian Way, a major road from Rome to the eastern provinces, the city was a center of trade and commerce. Today, it is known as Thessaloniki, or Salonika.

Under the Romans the city had been made free because of its loyalty to Rome. As a free city it was allowed its own government and local laws. At its height, the city reached a population of 200,000. The city had a natural harbor, but the primary factor contributing to the city's greatness was that it lay right on the Roman road, the Egnatian Way.

Egnatian Way – Philippi

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Modern Thessaloniki (Salonika)

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The City of Thessalonica

Located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf (the Gulf of Salonica), a branch of the Aegean Sea, Thessalonica was a thriving seaport.

Unlike Philippi, which did not have a large enough Jewish population to support a synagogue (Acts 16:13), the Jewish presence in Thessalonica was significant and influential (Acts 17:1, 5–9).

Background to the Macedonian Calling

Paul's persecution in Philippi (**Acts 16:11-40**) is discussed in 1 Thessalonians.

He taught and baptized Lydia and her household (**Acts 16:11-15**).

Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison because Paul cast out a spirit from a slave girl and thereby deprived her owners of great gain (**Acts 16:16-24**).

After God released them from prison through an earthquake. Paul and his team taught and baptized the Philippian jailer (**Acts 16:25-34**).

The magistrates then pleaded with Paul and Silas to leave the city, and they left (**Acts 16:35-40**).

The Establishment of the Church at Thessalonica

1. When and by whom was the church at Thessalonica established?

Acts 17:1-4

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined **Paul and Silas**, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

The Establishment of the Church at Thessalonica

2. What trouble did Paul encounter in Thessalonica?

Acts 17:5-9

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market-place formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

6 When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also;

7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

Thessalonica – agora (marketplace)
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Thessalonica – agora (marketplace)

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Paul's Second Missionary Journey

These Jews followed Paul to Berea and stirred up the crowds to the extent that he went to Athens for a short time and then to Corinth.

(Acts 17:10-18:1).

He was in Corinth when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (**Acts 18:12**) His reign is reported from history to be A.D. 51- 52.

Author and Date of 1 Thessalonians

3. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians?

The author was **Paul**, who joined in his greetings by **Silvanus** and **Timothy** (**1:1**), with Timothy being mentioned again later in the letter (**2:18**).

1 Thessalonians was written during that time in **A.D. 51 or 52**, about 6 months after Paul fled Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians is considered one of Paul's earliest epistles. From the letter itself (**3:1-6**), and the record of Paul's travels in Acts (**Acts 17:10-18:11**), it appears that Paul wrote this letter soon after arriving in **Corinth** on his second journey.

The Church at Thessalonica

The church at Thessalonica:

Was founded on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9).

Was revisited by Paul (1 Cor. 16:5).

Included some Jews and a large number of Greeks and influential women (Acts 17:4; 2 Thess. 3:4, 7-8).

Did not support Paul. He worked at a secular job while there (1 Thess. 2:9); however, he did receive financial help from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:16).

Suffered persecution (1 Thess. 2:14).

Was well organized (1 Thess. 5:12).

Had several prominent believers known by name: Jason (Acts 17:6), Gaius (Acts 19:29), Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4), and Secundus (Acts 20:4).

Purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians

4. What was the purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians?

Paul's purpose in writing to them was:

To praise them for their steadfastness under persecution.

To instruct them about holy living.

To correct misunderstanding, especially about the coming of Christ.

Paul encourages the church by doing four things.

1. He commends their strong faith and love and hope (1 Th. 1:3f).

2. He answers the malicious charges against himself (1 Th. 2:1f).

3. He encourages the church to stand fast against persecution and to live holy lives (1 Th. 3:1–4:12).

4. He reinforces the hope of the Lord's return and the resurrection of those who have already passed on (1 Th. 4:13f).

Purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians

This book is unique because every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming of Christ (**1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23**) with his emphasis on perseverance and living holy.

1 Thessalonians speaks about Christ's coming and living our lives in relation to that event. Eternity is the hope that Christians have which encourages them to be faithful in this life.

God's people need to understand Him, by studying and applying His Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) and allowing that Word to dwell in them richly (Col. 3:16).

Purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians

Paul's letter **reflects joy** over the spiritual progress that the Thessalonians had made in the short time they had been believers:

1. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers. (1 Thess. 1:2)
2. For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews. (1 Thess. 2:13–14)
3. For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thess. 2:19–20)

Purpose for writing 1 Thessalonians

4. For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account? (1 Thess. 3:9)

5. Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more. (1 Thess. 4:9–10)

6. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thess. 5:11)

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

I. THE MODEL CHURCH, 1:1–3:13

- A. A Strong Church or Work, 1:1–4
- B. A Strong Conversion, 1:5–10
- C. A Strong and True Minister, 2:1–12
- D. A Strong People, 2:13–20
- E. A Strong Faith, 3:1–10
- F. A Strong Love, 3:11–13

Paul reminds the Thessalonians:

- 1. of their conversion and efforts for evangelism (1:1–10)**
- 2. of his and his fellow-missionaries' conduct during their visit (2:1–3:13)**

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

II. THE MODEL WALK OR LIFE, 4:1–12

A. A Walk that pleases God (Part I): A Life of Purity, 4:1–8

B. A Walk that pleases God (Part II): Four Practical Duties, 4:9–12

Paul urges the Thessalonians:

- 1. to abstain from sexual immorality (4:1–8)**
- 2. to show brotherly love and to lead a quiet life (4:9–12)**

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

III. THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, 4:13–5:24

A. The Lord's Return and the Resurrection, 4:13–5:3

B. The Lord's Return and the Believer's Behavior,
5:4–11

C. The Lord's Return and Behavior in the Church,
5:12–28

Paul urges the Thessalonians:

- 1. to be steadfast in bereavement (4:13–18)**
- 2. to show respect, to esteem those who instruct you in love and to live in peace with one another (5:1-11)**
- 3. to display righteousness in view of the unexpectedness of the coming of Jesus (5:12-28)**

Purpose for writing 2 Thessalonians

5. What was the purpose for writing 2 Thessalonians?

The Apostle Paul wrote this second letter to the church in Thessalonica very shortly after the first letter had been delivered.

Some of the Thessalonians had become so convinced that the Lord would return immediately, they quit working to support themselves and their families, and literally decided to “wait” for the Lord to come back from heaven.

Paul was encouraged by their faithfulness and had some good words of encouragement for them because of their steadfastness.
(2 Thess. 1:3-4)

Outline of 2 Thessalonians

Chapter 1 – Paul offers hope during persecution.

Chapter 2 – Paul offers additional clarity concerning the “Day of the Lord”.

Chapter 3 – Paul give specific challenges to the idle people who refuse to work.

**Each chapter concludes with a prayer.
(2 Thess. 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:16-18)**

6. How can studying 1 & 2 Thessalonians increase your faith?

1. Abstain from sin
2. Show brotherly love and live in peace with others
3. Live a quiet life by obeying God's commandments
4. There is hope during persecution
5. Be ready for the Lord's return