

1 THESSALONIANS

Jesus Christ is Coming Again.

The beginning of the church at Thessalonica is found in Acts 16:6-10; 17:1-10. It was in Macedonia, the kingdom of Alexander the Great, that Paul landed. The city stood on the Thermaic Gulf with its hot springs, and famous harbor. Xerxes, the Persian, had his naval base there when he invaded Europe. In Roman times it was one of the world's great dockyards. In 315 B.C. Cassander had rebuilt the city and renamed it Thessalonica, the name of his wife, who was a daughter of Philip of Macedon and a half-sister of Alexander the Great. It was a free city. It had its own popular assembly and its own magistrates. Its population was around 200,000. Today Thessalonica is called Salonika with 70,000 inhabitants.

The city straddled the *Via Egnatia*, the Egnatian Road, running East and West. Its main street was part of the very road which linked Rome with the East. East and West converged on Thessalonica; it was said to be "in the lap of the Roman Empire." Trade poured into her from East and West.

If Christianity settled in Thessalonica it was bound to spread East along the Egnatian Road until all Asia was conquered and West until it stormed even the city of Rome.

When Paul arrived in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10) he preached in the Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths (v. 2). He had such success that the Jews raised so much trouble that he had to be smuggled out of the city and sent to Beroea (17:10-12). Paul left Timothy and Silas behind in his escape. Paul had been in Thessalonica only three weeks.

Paul was anxious to hear what was going on in Thessalonica. Paul was in Corinth when Timothy and Silas arrived from Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:6; Acts 18:5). They had brought abundant supplies from the Macedonian churches to meet Paul's needs (II Cor. 11:9), as the church in Philippi did once and again while Paul was in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15f).

"Timothy and Silas brought news of serious trouble in the church in Thessalonica. Some of the disciples there had misunderstood Paul's preaching about the second coming of Christ and had quit work and were making a decided disturbance on the subject" (A. T. Robertson).

Paul was against date setting, even though he believed in the eminent return of Christ.

AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul (1:1; 2:18). It is typical Pauline in structure, vocabulary, phraseology and character.

COMPANIONS OF PAUL: Silas (Silvanus), was a Jew (Acts 16:20), leader of the brethren in Jerusalem (15:22, 32, 40; I Pet. 5:12). Timothy was a younger man, a son of a Jewish Christian mother and a Gentile father (Acts. 16:1).

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DATE: A.D. 50 to 51 from Corinth. This is probably the first of Paul's writings that has come down to us, and it may be the first New Testament book with the possible exception of the *Gospel of Mark* or the *Epistle of James*.

PURPOSE: Paul writes both of the Thessalonian Epistles to correct gross misapprehension

and misrepresentation of his preaching about last things (eschatology). Silas and Timothy have returned from Thessalonica with news of some problems that needed urgent attention.

THEME: The return of Jesus Christ. In *I Thessalonians* every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming (1:10; 2:19-20; 3:11-13; 4:13-18; 5:23, 24).

KEY VERSE: 5:23-24

CONCERNS:

1. Some of the believers had stopped working and abandoned their responsibilities to await the Second Coming with a kind of hysterical expectancy. Paul corrects their misconceptions (4:11).
2. They were worried about those who had died and Christ had not returned. Paul gives them courage and hope in their bereavement (4:13-18).
3. There was a tendency to despise authority (5:12-14).
4. These were converted pagans who had come out of heathen vices, and it was easy for them to fall back into immorality (4:3-8).
5. As all ways there was a small group who slandered Paul and said the only reason he preached was to get what he could out of it (2:5, 9). Some accused him of being a dictator (2:6, 7, 11).
6. There was some division in the church (4:9; 5:13).

Second Thessalonians was written within a few weeks of the first letter. The second letter was written to clear up a misconception about the Second Coming. There were certain signs that would come before Christ's appearance. The two letters would give balance to the thinking about the Second Coming.

SOME KEY WORDS:

COMING *Parousia* means "presence" or "arrival" of persons or things (I Cor. 16:17; II Cor. 7:7; Phil. 2:12; II Cor. 10:10). It designated the royal visit of an emperor, king, a governor, ruler or famous person. For such visits special preparations had to be made. Taxes were imposed to present the king with a golden crown. All things must be made ready for the visit of the king. Provinces were dated as a new era of time from the *parousia* of the emperor. It was common to strike new coins to commemorate the visit of a king. The coming of the king brought a new set of values. The word is used to describe the entrance of a new conquering power and the visitation of a god. The day is coming when the King of Kings will come and reign with all of His glory and power. Preparations must be made (I Thess. 3:13; 5:23; I Jn. 2:28). The same Jesus who ascended to heaven will come again to visit the earth in personal presence (Acts 1:11) at the end of the age (Mat. 24:3) in power of glory (Mat. 24:27) to destroy the antichrist and evil (II Thess. 2:8), to raise the righteous dead (I Cor. 15:23), and to gather the redeemed (Mat. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; Jn. 5:28, 29; I Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; Jas. 5:7, 8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; I Jn. 2:28). *Parousia* is the time when the

3:13; 4:15; 5:23; II Thess. 2:1, 8, 9; Jas. 5:7, 8; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; I Jn. 2:28). *Parousia* is the time when the Lord shall come out of heaven (I Thess. 4:15; 1:10). At that moment the dead who are believers will rise first, and those who are believers and are alive will be changed and be caught up in the air by Jesus Christ.

DAY OF THE LORD —is an Old Testament expression meaning a day when God will personally intervene and bring salvation and judgment. In the New Testament it is related to the Second Coming of Christ (I Cor. 1:8; 5:5; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; II Thess. 2:2). This is not a twenty-four day, but a period of extended time during which the judgments of the Lord Jesus Christ will take place upon the earth. For the believer it is salvation, for the unbelieving world it is a day of judgment and tribulation. The period begins with the Tribulation and includes the events of the second coming of Christ and the millennium. It will come unexpectedly.

"Even so, come

Lord Jesus!"

[The Complete Series on 1 & 2 Thessalonians](#)

Title: Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

Series: A Look at the Book

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