

1-2 Thessalonians

Studying To Show
Ourselves Approved



By Charles Willis

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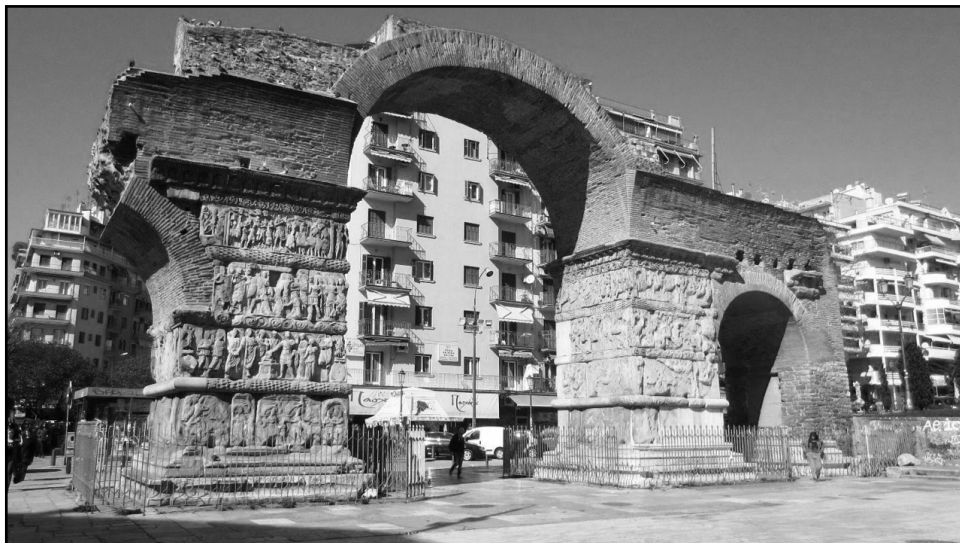
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Background of City

Thessalonica was a very important city because of the great natural seaport which made it economically vital to the Romans as well as a departure and arrival destination for troops and passengers. The city was located along the “Via Egnatia” – the main road from Rome to the East. It is believed the Macedonian’s King Cassander renamed the site in 315 B.C. after his wife Thessalonica who was half-sister to Alexander the Great. Prior to this the city was known as Therma from it’s hot springs. Under the Romans, Thessalonica was the capital of the second of four divisions of Macedonia, and when these were united to form one single province in 146 B.C. it became the capital and largest city in the province which was true through the time of these letters from Paul.

Under Augustus, Thessalonica became a free city with it’s own authority to appoint a governing board of magistrates which were called “politarchs”. Roman arches stood at Thessalonica’s two entrances to the Egnatian Way. The one built in AD 297 to honor the Roman Emperor Galerius remains intact today (Picture below). Portions of the great wall that surrounded the city still stands. The strategic location of the city ensured it’s success and it was believed to have sustained a population in excess of 200,000 people in the first century. The city survives today under the shortened name “Salonika”.



Beginnings of the Congregation

Paul visited the city during his second missionary journey as recorded in Acts 17. This is believed to have been between 50 and 60 A.D. Silas and Timothy accompanied Paul and the three of them are in the salutations of each letter.

There was a large group of Jews in Thessalonica. Many of these were Jewish converts from pagan idol worship. The monotheistic belief of Judaism appealed to them when they tired of Greek paganism. At the same time they were repelled by its narrow nationalism and ritual requirements. So, when Paul came to town preaching Jesus Christ, many of the gentiles were very receptive to the message. The Jews became jealous of Paul's success and organized a mob by hiring much of the low-life of the city. The mob was unable to find Paul or Silas so they captured Jason (their host) and took him before the Politarchs and accused him of harboring traitors to Rome. The authorities took a "pledge" from Jason and the others who had been taken and released them.

The Jews from Thessalonica followed Paul to Berea and stirred up such an opposition Paul left for Athens, though Silas and Timothy remained. Acts 23 records where they join back up – but 1 Thessalonians 3:2 clearly implies Timothy had previously joined Paul and been sent back to Thessalonica. It was the return from the second trip that found them together in Acts 28:5.

The church became a steadfast congregation in Thessalonica when the surrounding cities of Philippi, Berea and Athens apparently were not (in comparison). When Paul arrived in Corinth he began his preaching "*in weakness, and often in fear, and in much trembling*" (1 Cor. 2:3). But when word came of the faith of the saints in Thessalonica, Paul was much encouraged. Out of this sense of relief and assurance Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonians.

We later read of Paul sending Timothy to Macedonia (Acts 10:22) and he himself made two visits to that region (Acts 20:1-3). Some of the Thessalonians began traveling with Paul, such as Gaius and Aristarchus (Acts 19:29), Secundus (Acts 20:4) and perhaps Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).

Date of Writing

It would seem logical that some longer period of time occurred before the first letter was written. Long enough for their faith to be spoken of "*in every place*" (1 Thess. 1:8). While Paul was in Corinth he was arrested and brought before Gallio, the Proconsul of Achaia, This was the same period in which Timothy returned with the new of the faith of the saints in Thessalonica. Secular sources allow us to pinpoint the reign of Gallio. Proconsuls generally ruled for one year. From this information it is generally understood that the first letter to the Thessalonians would have been written between 50 and 51 A.D. Most believe the second epistle was written a few months later, also from Corinth.

1. What three things did Paul remember or bear in mind about the Thessalonians?
2. How did God “*choose*” or “*elect*” the Thessalonians?
3. How was the gospel delivered to them?
4. What kind of men did the apostles “*prove themselves to be*” while with the Thessalonians?
5. How did the Thessalonians become “*imitators*” of the apostles and the Lord?
6. What kind of church was the congregation in Thessalonica?
7. What was the effect of Paul’s preaching?
8. What other passages support the idea we are “*waiting*” for Christ’s return?

1. Why was their coming to Thessalonica not in vain?
2. What was the religious climate in which Paul originally taught to them?
3. Verses 3–4 speak of their exhortation. What was it NOT and what WAS it?
4. Paul said they spoke “*not as pleasing men*”.
 - A. How does this relate to Paul’s unusual reception to the message?
 - B. What advice did Paul give Timothy similar to this idea?
 - C. How do verses 5–6 explain Paul’s point?
 - D. Why is the phrase “*who examines our heart*” added in verse 4?
5. Explain Paul’s meaning in verse 7 about they “*proved to be gentle among you*”.
6. What are Paul’s feelings for this congregation?
7. Verse 9 speaks of their working night and day. Is this spiritual work or life sustaining employment?
8. How do verses 10–11 tell us Paul taught them?
9. How do we “*walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls us*”?
10. Why did the Thessalonians believe? (see verse 13)
11. What happened to believers as a result of the their faith?
12. Why were the Thessalonians Paul’s glory and joy?

1. Who was sent to Thessalonica and for what purpose?
2. What had Paul foretold while he was with the Thessalonians?
3. What afflictions are we aware of that the Thessalonians endured?
4. What report did Timothy bring back to Paul?
5. How did this report help them?
6. What was lacking in their faith?
7. Why did Paul desire God to direct his way to Thessalonica? Why this statement?
8. In verses 12–13 what does Paul pray for the Thessalonians?
9. How does God “establish” our hearts “*unblameable in holiness*”?

1. What previous verse or phrase parallels this statement in verse one: “*as you received from us instructions as to how you ought to walk and please God*”?
2. Paul’s point in verse one is what?
3. According to Paul, all religious instructions or commands must be based on what?
4. Define sanctification (verse 3).
 - A. What examples did Paul list?
 - B. Why would the Thessalonians possibly reject this teaching?
 - C. How applicable are these thoughts to modern society and us in the church?
5. In verse 9 Paul changes the topic to what? What instructions does he give about this topic?
6. Why did Paul give these instructions in verse 11 about making them our “*ambition*”?
7. What was Paul’s point in teaching about the dead in Christ?
8. From the remainder of chapter 4 create a chronological list of events to take place at Christ’s return.
9. Define “rapture” and “1,000 year reign”. Indicate their placement in your chronological list.
10. Why and how are we to “*comfort one another*” with these words?

1. How will the day of the Lord come?
2. Describe Paul's allusion to us as being "*sons of light*" (verse 5) and not "*sleeping*" (verse 6).
3. How do these images of armor compare with those in Ephesians 6?
4. Why are WE not destined for wrath?
5. Either "*awake*" or "*asleep*" (verse 10) we may live together with Him. What can we infer to have been believed in Thessalonica?
6. If they are encouraging one another, why does Paul include the instruction in verse 11?
7. To whom do verses 12–13 refer? Why are we to esteem them highly?
8. Paul "*urged*" the brethren of several truths needed in our life (verses 14–18). Choose three or four and prepare supporting passages that indicate these ARE to be the attributes of all Christians. Try to make at least one application to our life from each truth you examine.
9. How does "*God himself sanctify*" us "*entirely*" (verse 23)?
10. What's the difference between "*spirit and soul and body*"?
11. What implication is derived from verse 27?

1. How do verses 3–4 relate to the book of 1st Thessalonians?

2. What is their “*plain indication*” that they are “*worthy of the kingdom of God*”?

3. What will God do to those who persecute Christians?
 - A. Define “*retribution*” from verse 8.

 - B. Who will deal out God’s retribution?

 - C. Who are those who “*do not know God*”?

4. What will be the penalty for these?

5. What will be the response of the faithful at Christ’s return?

6. What’s required for God to “*count us worthy of our calling*”?

7. How is the name of Jesus glorified in us?

8. From the remarks in chapter 1, what is Paul’s attitude about the Thessalonians?

1. What does Paul give as the reason for writing this letter?
 - A. What had they apparently been told?
 - B. Who told them this?
2. What does Paul affirm must come first before the second coming of Christ?
 - A. How does Paul describe this event?
 - B. What restrains the “*son of destruction*”?
3. What will happen to “*the man of lawlessness*”?
4. Does Paul identify the man of lawlessness?
5. What will the coming of the lawless one be like?
6. From verses 9–12, is it true that men will be unable to determine truth?
7. How did God choose the Thessalonians from the beginning?
8. How are we called by God today?
9. What is Paul’s concluding advice regarding the coming of the Lord?
10. How does God comfort and strengthen our hearts in every good work and word?

1. What type of things does Paul encourage the Thessalonians to pray about?
2. What action does Paul attribute to the Lord in the life of the Thessalonians?
3. Define “keeping aloof” (verse 6).
 - A. Who are we to keep aloof from?
 - B. How were some leading an “unruly life” in the congregation?
4. What order did Paul teach them?
 - A. How was he an example of this to them?
 - B. What command did he now sent to those not working?
 - C. How does verse 13 fit in the context?
5. If the unruly did not obey this command, what were the faithful commanded to do?
6. What is the significance of Paul’s statement in verse 17?