

# 1 Thessalonians: *The Church and the End of Time*

## Introduction

**I. The Author**—Paul is considered by almost all NT scholars to be the human author.

**II. The Audience**— The church of Thessalonica was founded by Paul and Silas on Paul's second missionary journey in the Spring of A.D. 50. After their imprisonment and release in Philippi (Acts 17:1-9). Luke and Timothy were left behind in Philippi to establish the infant church there. Timothy rejoined Paul and Silas in Berea (Acts 17:10-14)

Upon arriving at Thessalonica, Paul reasoned for three Sabbath days in the Jewish synagogue. His emphasis was on three key points: 1) The Messiah of the OT had to suffer and rise again from the dead (Acts 17:3); 2) Jesus is the promised Messiah (Acts 17:3); and 3) Jesus is the King who will return to earth to reign (Acts 17:7).

Due to Paul's success, the Jews were moved with jealousy and gathered a group of worthless thugs from the marketplace to set the city in an uproar. The mob went to the home of Jason where Paul and Silas were staying. When they discovered that Paul and Silas were not there they dragged Jason and some of the other believers before the rulers (*politarchs*) of the city (Acts 17:4-6). The rulers made Jason and the others post a bond and released them. The bond may have included some assurance that Paul and Silas would leave town and not return (see, 1 Thess. 2:18). Paul and Silas left the city that night realizing that their presence was causing added affliction for the believers. Their next stop was 50 miles away in Berea (Acts 17:10).

After leaving Berea, Paul traveled alone to Athens (Acts 17:16-34), and then on to Corinth. Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul in Corinth bringing him news of conditions in the Thessalonian church (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:1-6). Filled with thanksgiving and praise, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from the city of Corinth.

**III. The Aim**—Paul wrote this letter to *express* his thanks to God for them (1:2; 2:13; 3:9), to *explain* why he had not yet visited them again (2:17-18), and to *correct* some doctrinal (3:10; 4:13; 5:1-11) and practical problems (4:1-12; 5:12-18).

## IV. The Arrangement

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|---|----------|
| I. Salutation (1:1)                       |          |
| II. The Work of Faith (1:2–3:13)          | PAST     |
| III. The Labor of Love (4:1-12)           | PRESENT  |
| IV. The Steadfastness of Hope (4:13–5:24) | PROSPECT |
| V. Closing Words (5:23-27)                |          |
| VI. Benediction (5:28)                    |          |

## **V. The Analysis**

There are two remarkable features of Thessalonians. First, the Lord's coming is mentioned in every chapter of the Thessalonian epistles. 26% of 1 Thessalonians deals with prophecy (23 of 89 verses). Second, the letters are written to new believers with less than a year of Christian experience, yet are rich in doctrinal content. Paul presents election, sanctification, the Trinity, assurance, the nature of man, the resurrection, the rapture, the Day of the Lord, eternal punishment, the restrainer, and the coming man of sin (Antichrist).

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## **VI. The Application**