

1 Thessalonians 1

What do we know about the city of Thessalonica?

- It is still in existence today – the modern name: Salonika, Greece
- It was founded in 315 B.C. by the Macedonian King Cassander, named for his wife, who was the sister of Alexander the Great
- It was located on the Egnatian Way (famous Roman road)
- From Thessalonica, the gospel could spread west to Rome and east to Asia
- In 42 B.C., it was given "free city" status by the Roman government, because it sided with Anthony and Octavius in the Second Civil War.
- It was a very strategic city in the First Century

Background to the church at Thessalonica:

- Why did Paul go into Europe on his Second Missionary Journey?** Because of the Macedonian call (*Acts 16:9*)
- What city did Paul go to first?** Philippi
- What happened there?** *Acts 16* – Lydia and the jailer were converted, and the church was established

Read Acts 17:1-9 - From this passage, what do we learn about the church at

Thessalonica? First members: Greeks, women, Jason

- There was much hostility from the Jews in Thessalonica and very bitter persecution over Paul's presence
- From *1 Thessalonians 1:9*, it appears that most of the members of the congregation at Thessalonica were Gentiles (former idol worshippers), not Jews (different from church at Philippi and many other congregations)

The letter of *1 Thessalonians* is believed to have been written from Corinth (based on *Acts 19:5*, *1 Thessalonians 3:6*) – if so, the date for this letter would be around 50-51 A.D. (reign of Claudius – 50 A.D.)

- So *1 Thessalonians* may have been the first book in the New Testament canon to be completed

Purpose of the letter: Because of the pagan background of the members there, the gospel was being compromised (some moral looseness, some misunderstandings about the Second Coming, no church discipline) – the three themes of this letter

1 Thessalonians 1.1

V1 - **What was the typical way that Paul began his letters?** His name, the person to whom the letter was addressed, a blessing

- Did he follow that pattern here?** Yes (and in most of his letters)

-**Which men were with Paul as he wrote these letters?** Silvanus (Latin form of Silas, which is Greek) and Timothy

-**Why did Paul not identify himself as an apostle in the introduction?** His apostleship was not being attacked at Thessalonica, and he must have had a very warm relationship with the church there

-**Why do you think that Paul included Silas and Timothy in the introduction of**

this letter? Because he was not ashamed to associate with men lower than himself and to give them credit for their faith

-Why is Jesus called "Lord" in this verse? To encourage those who had come from paganism to realize that there is only one Lord

1 Thessalonians 1.2-10

V 2 - What did Paul constantly do for the Thessalonians? Remember them in his prayers

-Should we pray for our congregation? Yes

-Do you ever pray for your congregation?

V 3 - As Paul prayed for the congregation at Thessalonica, what did he keep in mind? Their faith, labor of love, steadfastness of hope

-Notice the use of "Lord" again – his work

V 4 - What term of endearment did Paul use here for the Thessalonians? Brethren beloved by God

-What did God do for the Thessalonians? He chose them

-Were the Thessalonians chosen against their will to be children of God? No –

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13

-When they accepted the gospel, they were chosen by God to be saved

V 5 - How had Paul presented the gospel at Thessalonica? In word, but also in power (Holy Spirit and miracles)

-Where in 1 Thessalonians can you find the three parts of the Godhead? V 1 – Father and Son, v 5 – Holy Spirit

-What is the implication of v 5? That Paul had set a good example while at Thessalonica

-See 2 Thessalonians 3:8 – Paul had another job at Thessalonica (in addition to preaching)

-So Paul set the right kind of example before the Thessalonians (some of them had quit their jobs to await the Second Coming of Jesus)

V 6 - What had the Thessalonians done, because of the example of Paul? Become imitators of him and of the Lord

-What does "tribulation" refer to? The violence involved with the establishment of the church at Thessalonica

-What had the church at Thessalonica become? An example to the churches of Macedonia and Achaia

V 7-8 - What compliment did Paul pay to the Thessalonians? The faith of the Thessalonians had become known far and wide

-This was because to their location on the Egnatian Way

-So Paul did not need to say anything about their faith, but he was going to have to address some of our problems there

V 9 - What do we learn about the background of the Thessalonians here? They had been persuaded to give up their idols and turn to the one true God, the living God
-Note the emphasis in v 9 on turning from idols to God (true repentance always requires a turning, a change of direction, not just saying that we are sorry)
-Remember that Mt. Olympus was only about 50 miles away from Thessalonica
-That might explain the idolatry at Thessalonica

V 10 - What were the Thessalonians waiting for? The Second Coming of Christ (they had a misunderstanding on this, as we shall see later)
-**What is the general attitude of Paul in this first chapter?** Friendly, did not attack them as enemies
-Paul had great love for the church at Thessalonica, a very warm, personal introduction to the letter

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