

## I and II Thessalonians

### Setting:

The city of Thessalonica was the largest and most important city in Macedonia. It enjoyed numerous civic and commercial privileges. In 42 BCE it became a free city with its own governance. It was on both the major East-West trade route as well as significant North-South trade routes. It was the home of both major Greek cults as well as the Emperor Cult which declared that Caesar was a god. Any opposition to these cults was dealt with severely. In other words to claim that there was a supreme God greater than the Greek gods or Caesar was treason.

### The Church:

The church was founded by Paul, Silas and Timothy. They arrived in 49 CE after they left Philippi. They established a mainly Gentile church with a few Jewish believers. There was great opposition from the synagogue (seeing Christianity as a cult) and from the other cults (Christianity claimed to be better than all of them). A riot ensued which forced the threesome from the city. Paul always wanted to return but was not able to. The church even in the face of persecution continued to exist.

### Purpose of Letter:

Paul wanted to find out how the people were doing, encourage them, answer questions and deal with some difficult situations in the church.

### I Thessalonians: (from Michael W. Holmes in The NIV Application Commentary Series: I and II Thessalonians)

1. Prescript (1:1)
2. Remembrance and Encouragement with Respect to the Past (1:2-3:13)
  - a. Opening Thanksgiving (1:2-10)
  - b. Apostolic Attitudes Toward Thessalonians While Present (2:1-12)
  - c. Second Thanksgiving ((2:13-16)
  - d. Apostolic Attitudes Toward Thessalonians While Apart(2:17 – 3:8)
  - e. Third Thanksgiving (3:9 – 13)
3. Exhortation and Encouragement with Respect to the Future (4:1-5:22)
  - a. General Introduction (4:1-2)
  - b. Holiness and Sexual Ethics (4:3-8)
  - c. Mutual Love (4:9-12)
  - d. Questions about the return of Jesus (4:13-5:11)
    - i. What happens to the dead (4:13-18)
    - ii. Questions about dates and times (5:1-11)
  - e. Congregational Conduct (5:12-22)
    - i. Responsibilities toward leaders (5:12-13)
    - ii. Responsibilities toward individuals (5:14-15)
    - iii. Responsibilities toward God (5:16-18)
    - iv. Responsibilities toward the Holy Spirit (5:19-22)
4. Letter Closing (5:23-28)
  - a. Closing Prayer (5:23-24)

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- b. Benediction and Requests (5:25-28)

### II Thessalonians:

1. Prescript (1:1-2)
2. Thanksgiving and Encouragement in the face of persecution (1:3-12)
  - a. Thanksgiving (1: 3-4)
  - b. Instruction and Encouragement (1:5-10)
  - c. Prayer report (1:11-12)
3. The return of Jesus and the Man of Lawlessness (2:1-12)
  - a. Introduction (2:1-2)
  - b. Instruction and Encouragement (2:3-12)
4. Transition (2:13-3:5)
  - a. Thanksgiving (2:13-14)
  - b. Exhortation (2:15)
  - c. Prayer (2:16-17)
  - d. Request for Prayer (3:1-2)
  - e. Expressions of Confidence (3:3-4)
  - f. Further Prayer (3:5)
5. The Problem of the Disorderly (3:6-15)
  - a. The Apostolic Command and Example (3:6-10)
  - b. Orders for the Disorderly (3:11-12)
  - c. Instructions for the Congregation (3:13-15)
6. Letter Closing (3:16-18)
  - a. Benediction (3:16)
  - b. Personal Greeting (3:17)
  - c. Second Benediction (3:18)