

1. Today's Lectures: Overview

1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
Paul's Eschatology

2. Thessalonica and Paul

Capital city of Macedonia on the Egnatian Way
City in the Roman Empire with cult of Roma and of the emperor, amongst others
Paul visits in the late 40s/early 50s
Paul writes to this city, most likely from Corinth, first around 50/51 CE
No scriptural quotations: does this suggest a Gentile audience (1 Thess 1.9)
The timeline of Acts 17-18 vs 1 Thess 1-2
Paul as a manual labourer (1 Thess 2.9; 2 Thess 3.8)
Paul preaches the gospel and as a result some accept: Paul as apostle (1 Thess 1.9; 2.1); God's word (1 Thess 2.13); and the Spirit (1 Thess 1.6)

3. Paul and the Thessalonians

Context in Thessalonica could help explain the description of conflict/affliction in 1 Thess 2.2; 2.14; 3.3
Relationship of affection and endearment
A letter of friendship and/or exhortation and encouragement

4. 1 Thessalonians

Authorship is not in doubt
Written to address a specific situation about which Paul only knows from: 1. rumours, 2. Timothy
Possible temptation/conflict could be from: 1. social pressure, 2. persecution, 3. other missionaries
Three main issues in the Thessalonian community that Paul seeks to address:

1. concern for the death of loved ones before the Parousia (return/coming of Christ)
2. idleness and poor attitudes towards work
3. misunderstanding of Paul's teachings

One overarching purpose of the letter is to restore hope (4.13)

The Parousia plays a prominent role in this letter: 1.10; 2.19; 3.13; 4.13-5.11; 5.23

Overview:

- 1.1-10: Salutation and Thanksgiving (from Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus)
- 2.1-16: Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica and a second thanksgiving
- 2.17-3.13: The present situation in Thessalonica
(Paul's desire to visit and Timothy's mission & report)
- 4.1-12: Living a life that is pleasing to God: words of instruction
- 4.13-5.11: The Lord's Coming (the Parousia)
- 5.12-28: Final greetings and prayer

5. Relationship between 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Questions of authenticity affect interpretation of setting, purpose, meaning, and date

Focus especially on language and literary relationship, especially structural similarities

Are they too similar in structure?

Eschatological differences: The Day of the Lord has come (2 Thess 2.2) vs the eschatology of 1 Thess

Issues surrounding pseudepigraphy

Is Paul still alive in 2 Thess? Some say no based on 2 Thess 2.2, 2.15, 3.14, and 3.17.

6. 2 Thessalonians

Authorship is debated (see above and below)

Dating is either directly after Paul's first letter (early 50s) or later in the 1st century

Situation is one of persecution from unnamed non-Christians (1.4-7) who reject the gospel (2.10-12)

Three main issues in the community that the author seeks to address:

1. suffering some form of persecution
2. eschatological issues around the belief that the day of the Lord has come (2.1-12)
3. idleness of some followers of Christ who refuse to work for a living (3.6-12)

Issues surrounding 2.1-12 and the identity of the lawless one and the restrainer

Overview:

1.1-12: Thanksgiving (from Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus)

2.1-12: The end and the "lawless one"

2.13-17: Encouragement to persevere

3.1-5: Prayer and thanksgiving

3.6-12: Warning against idlers

3.13-18: Conclusion

Arguments for Pseudonymity

Literary dependence between 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Contradictory eschatological discourses (1 Thess 5.1-11; 2 Thess 2.1-12)

Lack of personal references/affection in 2 Thessalonians

Possible references to forgery in 2 Thess 2.2 and 3.17

Possible references to Paul as no longer living but only in tradition (text)

Arguments for Authenticity

Literary affinities

Denouncing of fraudulent letters (2 Thess 2.2)

Eschatological focus

7. Paul's Eschatology

Key question: does Paul's eschatological view develop or does he change his mind?

Debates: realised or over-realised eschatology, imminent or delayed future eschatology

A few key terms that are often connected to eschatology are "apocalypticism",

Parousia (1 Cor 4.18-21; Rom 1.11-12; 1 Cor 16.10-11; 1 Thess 5.23; 1 Cor 1.8; Phil

2.15), and "day of the Lord" (1 Thess 5.2; 1 Cor 5.5; 2 Cor 1.14; Phil 1.6, 10)

Some key texts: Romans 6; Colossians 3; 1 and 2 Thess; 1 Cor 15; Galatians 1; 2 Cor 4

Driving force is that the death and resurrection of Jesus signal the beginning of the end that would be consummated with the Parousia of Jesus (1 Cor 1.8; Phil 1.6, 2.16; 1 Thess 5.2)

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