

## 2 THESSALONIANS

- I. Authorship -- Paul is the stated author of this letter (1:1). However, the Pauline authorship of this book has been challenged by some and is more debated than that of 1 Thessalonians.
  1. Alleged differences between 1 and 2 Thessalonians have caused some scholars to reject the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians. For example, some argue that the books present different eschatologies: Christ's return is imminent in 1 Thess. but not in 2 Thess. A careful reading of both letters, however, actually reveals a substantial similarity in style, thought and theme.
  2. These suggested discrepancies are not substantial. They are differences more of emphasis than substance. In addition, the testimony of the early church is strong, perhaps even stronger than for 1 Thessalonians. Consequently, Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians should be confidently affirmed.
- II. Background of the epistle.
  1. Somehow, unknown to us, Paul heard some disturbing news of happenings at the church at Thessalonica and wrote 2 Thessalonians. This letter followed shortly after 1 Thessalonians, most likely within eighteen months. The condition of the church is much the same in both epistles (compare 1 Thess. 1:3-4 with 2 Thess. 1:3-7; 1 Thess. 2:15-16 with 2 Thess. 3:2 and Acts 18:6). Like 1 Thessalonians this epistle was written from Corinth on Paul's 2nd missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:17).
  2. There is some debate as to which epistle can first, but it can be affirmed from 2 Thessalonians 2:15, "...you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us," that 1 Thessalonians preceded 2 Thessalonians. The letter referred to in 2 Thessalonians seems to presuppose the existence of 1 Thessalonians.

### III. Date and place.

1. Again, it is most probable that 2 Thessalonians was written shortly after 1 Thessalonians. Second Thessalonians lists the same associates of Paul as 1 Thessalonians, thus it is hard to assign 2 Thessalonians to a different period.
2. Second Thessalonians was probably penned in Corinth during Paul's second missionary journey (A.D. 50-52).

### IV. The purpose of 2 Thessalonians.

1. Paul wrote this second epistle for two basic reasons.
  - a. The first was to correct some misunderstandings regarding the Day of the Lord. Some false teachers produced spurious information to the effect Paul had said the Day of the Lord was present (2:1-2). Because the church was undergoing persecution (1 Thess. 2:14-16), this appeared to be a logical deduction. This problem is addressed in 2:1-12.
  - b. Paul also wrote to correct disorderliness in the church. Some reasoned that they should leave their jobs because the Lord's coming was so near. Paul wrote 3:6-16 to correct the resulting idleness.

### V. The features of the epistle.

1. Second Thessalonians is much like 1 Thessalonians. However, there are some features which make them different.
  - a. In 1 Thessalonians the emphasis is on the coming of the Lord in the air for His saints; in 2 Thessalonians it is on the coming of the Lord with the saints to earth.
  - b. In 1 Thessalonians the coming of Christ stands out. In 2 Thessalonians the coming of the antichrist stands out.

- c. In 1 Thessalonians there is much said about comfort. In 2 Thessalonians there is much to do with correction.

VI. A general outline.

- I. The pastoral: a word of comfort and commendation (1:1-12).
- II. The prophetic: a word of caution and correction (2:1-17).
- III. The practical: a word of command and clarification (3:1-18).