



THESSALONIANS

AN INTRODUCTION TO PAUL'S LETTER

The Apostle Paul (c. 1657), by Rembrandt



INTRO

- Why study these letters?
- Not the typical Paul Theology of Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians)
 - Justification by Faith, Atonement Theology
- 1. The earliest letters of Paul and the earliest Christian Writings
- 2. Eschatology – Study of end times - Hope
- 3. Holiness, Consecration, Sanctification, Dedication One's Life to God
- 4. Short Letters address practical matters – Typical personal letters
- 5. Emphasis on work and labor

Paul's message to the Thessalonian church can be summarized in one word—"hope."

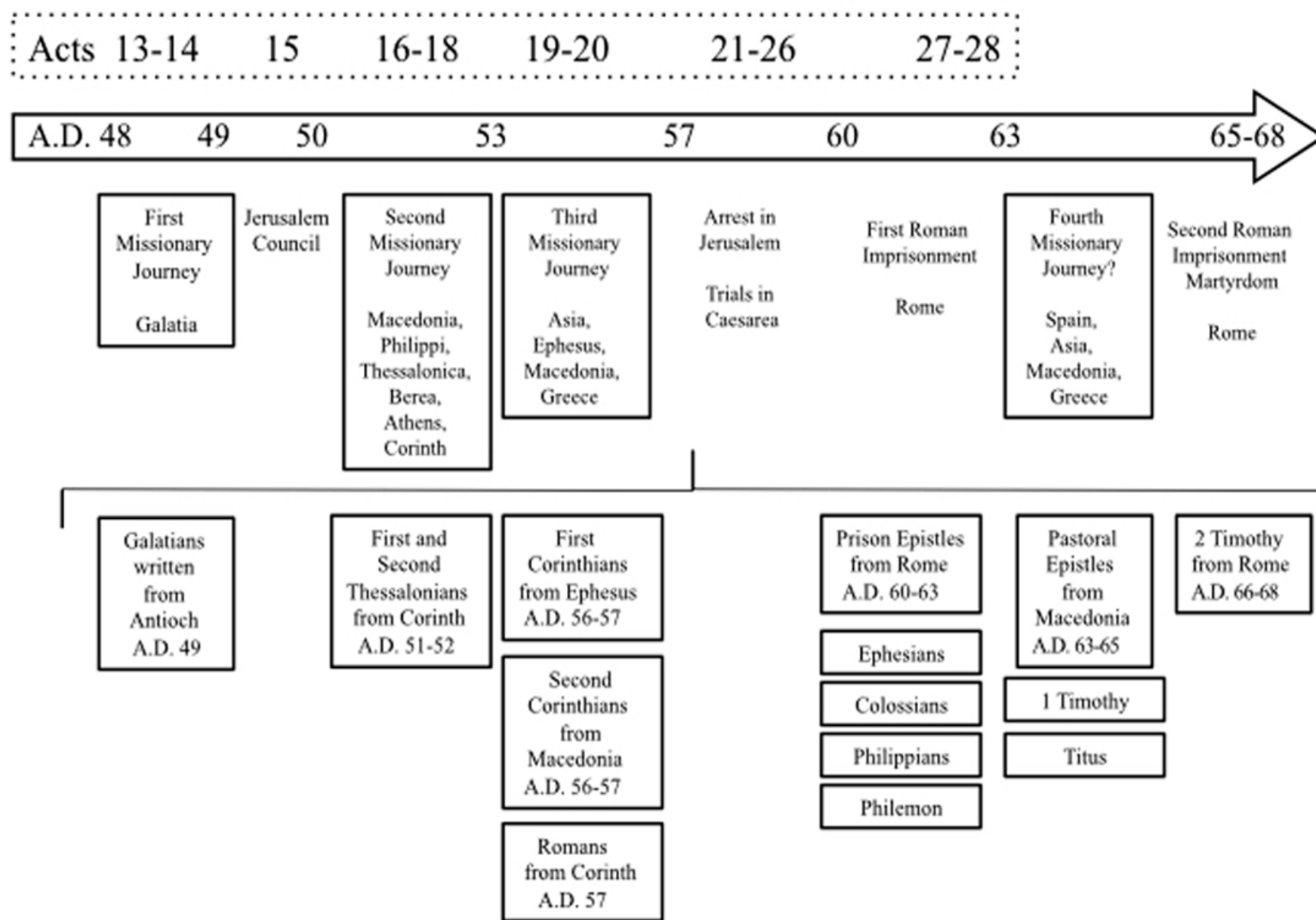
BACKGROUND ON THESSALONICA

- Dates back to 316 BC – named after the wife of Macedonia Leader/King
 - Daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander
- Rome took control in 168 BC – became the capital of the province of Macedonia
- After Julius Caesar's murder – it supported Octavian & Mark Antony over Brutus & Cassius
 - As a result, Antony made it a free city, giving it benefits, and still got support from Rome
- By Paul's time it was now a major cosmopolitan city (Greeks, Italians, Thracians, and Jews)
 - Major crossroads – trade route – great prosperity – Egnatian Way
- Religion was diverse (Greek Gods, Egyptian Gods, temples for Caesar)
 - Caesar as divine – no other king – four temples to Caesar



Thessalonica.

Timeline for Acts, Paul's Ministry and Epistles



HOW DOES CHRISTIANITY COME TO THESSALONIAN ? THESSALONIAN CHURCH (ACTS 18:5; 1 THESS. 3:1-6).

1. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke came to Philippi. -Vision - Man of Macedonian (Acts 16)
2. Paul and Silas went on to Thessalonica, leaving Timothy and Luke in Philippi (Acts 17:4, 10).
3. Timothy left Philippi to rejoin Paul and Silas in Berea (Acts 17:14).
4. Paul departed from Berea, leaving Silas and Timothy there with instructions to join him in Athens (Acts 17:14-15).
5. Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul at Athens (Acts 17:16).
6. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica from Athens (1 Thess. 3:2).
Since Timothy was not with Paul and Silas when they were forced out of town (Acts 17:9).
7. After Timothy left, Silas was also sent to Thessalonica (Acts 18:5).
8. Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth (Acts 18:1).
9. Timothy and Silas came to Paul at Corinth from Macedonia (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6).
10. After hearing of the continued faithfulness in the midst of persecution,
Paul sent them the communication known to us as 1 Thessalonians in A.D. 50 or 51 from Corinth

ORDER OF THE LETTERS

WHY DID PAUL WRITE HIS LETTERS?

- Biblical Order - By Length / Then by City and length
- The majority of Scholars agree 1st Thessalonians was 1st and was one of the earliest writings
- Based on the Background and Situation / Issues in the community
 - Galatians – works of the law and circumcision
 - Corinthians – infighting and division
 - Philemon – slave Onesimus
 - Thessalonians – *limited information on what is going on*
 - *Persecution / Hard Times / Death / End Times / The Will of God / Live Holy Lives / Sexual Immorality*
- *Who is the letter written to?*
 - *Gentiles – not to the Jews – No reference to Jewish Scriptures*
 - *Letter of Acts says Paul was preaching/teaching in the synagogues*
 - *God-Fearers – Some connection to Jews (Admiration – Benefaction – Participation – Strong Identification)*

MESSAGE

- 1 Thessalonians - Three key purposes in mind.
 1. To express his thanks to God for them (1:2; 2:13; 3:9)
 2. To explain why he had not yet visited them again (2:17-18)
 3. To correct doctrinal (3:10; 4:13; 5:1-11) and practical (4:1-12; 5:12-18) problems.
- 2 Thessalonians - Three main groups of people are addressed in this epistle:
 1. Persecutors of the church (chapter 1)
 2. False teachers (chapter 2)
 3. Idle church members (chapter 3).

SYNOPSIS / PURPOSE

- 1 Thessalonians

- expresses his thanks and **praise** for the Thessalonian believers (1:2-10).
- **encourage** the Christians who were making good progress in their new faith (2:1-16).
- **defend himself** against attacks by his enemies, specifically his Jewish opponents (2:1-16).
- **Exhort** his readers to **stand firm** in persecution—and not return to paganism (2:17—3:13).
- **encourage** his readers to continue growing in Christ (4:1-12; 5:16-24).
- clarify the "**fate**" of Christians who die before the **Lord's return** (4:13-18)
- **urge** his readers to watch for the Lord to return (5:1-11).
- **deal** with certain aspects of **church life** (5:12-15).

- 2 Thessalonians

- **encourage** to persevere in the face of continuing **persecution** (1:3-10).
- **Clarify** the events/chronological order—the **day of the Lord**, to dispel false teaching (2:1-12).
- **instruct** the church how to deal with **lazy Christians** in their midst (3:6-15).

OUTLINE / THEMES

I THESSALONIANS

- A. Salutation
- B. Commendations / Reflections 1.2-3.13
 - A. Thanksgiving
 - B. Church Founding
 - C. Concerns / Plans
 - D. Prayer for Thessalonians
- C. Instructions 4.1-5.22
 - A. Christian Living
 - B. Resurrection of the Dead
 - C. Day of the Lord
 - D. Holy Living
- D. Conclusion

2 THESSALONIANS

- A. Salutation
- B. Encouragement in the face of suffering 1.3-12
 - A. Thanksgiving
 - B. Encouragement
- C. Day of the Lord / Mystery – Man of Lawlessness 2,1-17
 - A. Order of events
 - B. Comfort and Encouragement
- D. Exhortations for Future Growth 3.1-15
 - A. Prayer and Obedience
 - B. Paul's Example / Command to the Unruly
- E. Conclusion



QUICK FACTS

- When was it written?
 - Around AD 50, during Paul's second missionary journey.
- Where was it written?
 - In Corinth (province of Achaia) and sent to Thessalonica (province of Macedonia).
- Who wrote it?
 - Paul wrote the letter with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy as co-authors.
- Why was it written?
 - To provide encouragement to believers to continue in faith, hope, and love as they endure hardship while waiting for the Lord's return.

MESSAGE OF HOPE

- Paul's message to the Thessalonian church can be summarized in one word—"hope."
 - Paul's central emphasis: *in the tumult, chaos, confusion, and rough-and-tumble of life, you must trust God and God's future by moving forward in faith and faithfulness*
- *Paul's Faith / Hope / Love* - 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3 (ESV)
 - We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- *Application - Paul called the Thessalonians his hope, glory, and joy. That's affirmation!*
 - *Do you frequently affirm the people you love?*
 - *Do you strive to spend time with them, seek them out, send them your greetings, even drop them a note?*