

1 THESSALONIANS (Comments by Andrew Lincoln, also 2 THESS)

- 1) Written from Corinth, probably about 50 AD, earliest of all surviving letters and perhaps earliest of all the books of the New Testament. Thessalonica was founded in 316 BCE and named for Alexander's half-sister Thessaloniki. Due to the squabbles of Alexander's successors, it eventually received Rome as its patron in 167 BCE (see note at 1 Macc 1:5-9). /// This and 2 Thessalonians are apocalyptic gospels -- Paul's churches and letter recipients struggled with the "already" (Jesus' death and resurrection) and the "not-yet" (the parousia). They struggled with what God had already accomplished with Jesus' death and resurrection, and what God had not yet done with the forthcoming parousia.
- 2) 2:2 – "Opposition" is literally "contest," an athletic metaphor.
- 3) 2:5 – The appeal to God as a witness may be an allusion to Job 16:19: "Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my spokesman is on high."
- 4) 2:12 – "Lead a life worthy" is similar to the NIV, but is "conduct" in the NAB, and is "walk" in the original Greek.
- 5) 2:14 -- There should **not** be a comma after "Jews" -- Paul is chastising only the Jews who killed Jesus, and only the Jews who are hindering the growth of the church, not all Jews (Frank Gilliard). But Gary Wills believes that Paul *does* include Peter, James, and Barnabas and that Paul *is* anti-Semitic, or at least an anti-Christian/Jewish polemicist. (*What Paul Meant*, p. 129)
- 6) 2:19 – "Jesus coming" – the Greek "parousia" means "arrival" or "presence." Used to announce the arrival of an important person such as a king, with the added connotation that he was a triumphant conqueror in the Hellenistic world and the idea of a coronation on his arrival.
- 7) 3:1-8 -- The affliction (persecutions) at this time were probably alienation from former friends and pagan leaders trying to "seduce" or "lure" them back to their former life and religion (idolatry). Paul is worried about their faith because he had been with them for such a short time. He worried that they had not been Christians long enough to withstand persecution. In none of his other letters does he write to such a young church. /// "We live" – live a fuller, less anxious life.
- 8) 4:10 – Paul uses the term "philadelphia" for "brothers." Originally that term applied only to siblings, but Paul has extended it to all believers. "And sisters" is not in the original mss.
- 9) 4:13-18 -- The Thessalonians had been taught by Paul to believe that the parousia would occur **before** any of the new believers in Christ died. Now, one or more **have** died, and Paul is reassuring those still living that they will be saved. V. 4:15 -- Paul uses this term to give authority to what he says: Paul rarely explicitly identifies a saying as one of Jesus'. He rarely applied some teaching of Jesus to a problem at hand. However, see Matt 24:29 to match 1 Thess 4:17.
- 10) 5:8 -- "Let us put on" is actually in the aorist tense, and should be translated "having already put on..."
- 11) 5:14 – "Idle" is better translated "anti-social," in this context someone who is not in harmony with the nurturing function of church members.