

Introduction to 2 Thessalonians

NIV Study Bible

AUTHOR, DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

Paul's authorship of 2 Thessalonians has been questioned more often than that of 1 Thessalonians, in spite of the fact that it has more support from early Christian writers. Objections are based on internal factors rather than on the adequacy of the statements of the church fathers. It is thought that there are differences in the vocabulary (ten words not used elsewhere), in the style (it is said to be unexpectedly formal) and in the eschatology (the doctrine of the "man of lawlessness" is not taught elsewhere). However, such arguments have not convinced current interpreters. A majority still hold to Paul's authorship of 2 Thessalonians.

Because of its similarity to 1 Thessalonians, it must have been written not long after the first letter—perhaps about six months. The situation in the church seems to have been much the same. Paul probably penned it (see 1:1; 3:17) c. a.d. 51 or 52 in Corinth, after Silas and Timothy had returned from delivering 1 Thessalonians (see chart, p. 2261; see also Introduction to 1 Thessalonians).

PURPOSE

Inasmuch as the situation in the Thessalonian church has not changed substantially, Paul's purpose in writing is very much the same as in his first letter to them. He writes (1) to encourage persecuted believers (1:4–10), (2) to correct a misunderstanding concerning the Lord's return (2:1–12) and (3) to exhort the Thessalonians to be steadfast and to work for a living (2:13–3:15).

THEME

Like 1 Thessalonians, this letter deals extensively with eschatology (see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Theme). In fact, in 2 Thessalonians 18 out of 47 verses deal with this subject.

OUTLINE

- Introduction (ch. 1)
 - Greetings (1:1–2)
 - Thanksgiving for Their Faith, Love and Perseverance (1:3–10)
 - Intercession for Their Spiritual Progress (1:11–12)
- Instruction (ch. 2)
 - Prophecy regarding the Day of the Lord (2:1–12)
 - Thanksgiving for Their Election and Calling (Their Position) (2:13–15)
 - Prayer for Their Service and Testimony (Their Practice) (2:16–17)
- Injunctions (ch. 3)
 - Call to Prayer (3:1–5)
 - Charge to Discipline the Disorderly and Lazy (3:6–15)
 - Conclusion, Final Greetings and Benediction (3:16–18)