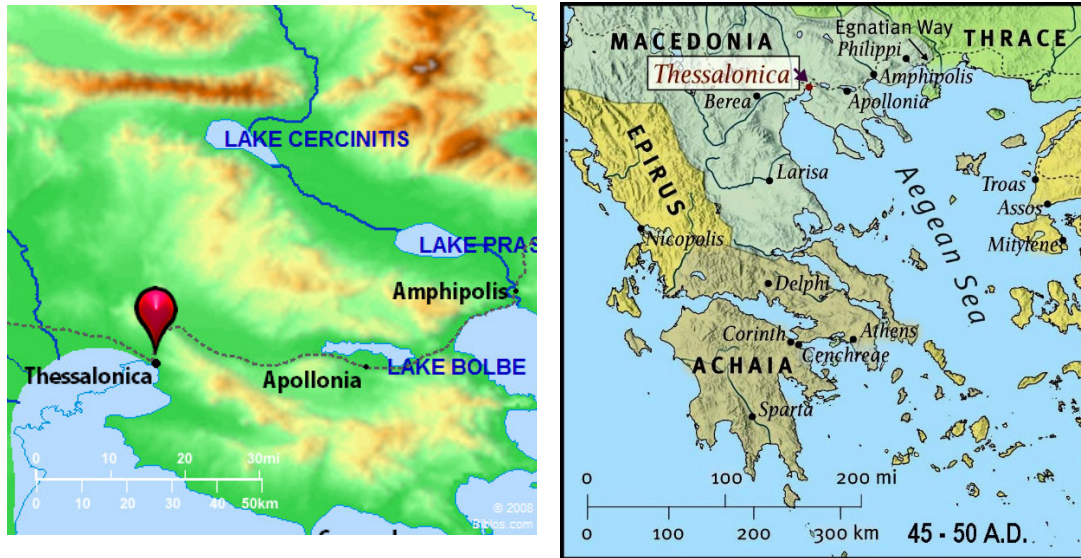


Introduction to 2nd Thessalonians

From BibleAtlas.org (Thessalonica and surrounding area)



Occurrences in scripture:

[Acts 17:1](#) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

[Acts 17:11](#) Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

[Acts 17:13](#) But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroea also, they came there likewise, agitating the multitudes.

[Acts 27:2](#) Embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea; Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

[Philippians 4:16](#) For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again to my need.

[2 Timothy 4:10](#) for Demas left me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

From the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: THESSALONICA
thes-a-lo-ni'-ka (Thessalonike, ethnic Thessalonikeus):

1. Position and Name:

One of the chief towns of Macedonia from Hellenistic times down to the present day. It lies in 40 degrees 40 minutes North latitude, and 22 degrees 50 minutes East longitude, at the northernmost point of the Thermaic Gulf (Gulf of Salonica), a short distance to the East of the mouth of the Axios (Vardar). It is usually maintained that the earlier name of Thessalonica was Therma or Therme, a town mentioned both by Herodotus (vii.121; 179;) and by Thucydides (i0.61; ii.29), but that its chief importance dates from about 315 B.C., when the Macedonian king Cassander, son of Antipater, enlarged and strengthened it by concentrating there the population of a number of neighboring towns and villages, and renamed it after his wife Thessalonica, daughter of Philip II and step-sister of Alexander the Great. This name, usually shortened since medieval times into Salonica or Saloniki, it has retained down to the present. Pliny, however, speaks of Therma as still existing side by side with Thessalonica (NH, iv.36), and it is possible that the latter was an altogether new foundation, which took from Therma a portion of its inhabitants and replaced it as the most important city on the Gulf.

2. History:

Thessalonica rapidly became populous and wealthy. In the war between Perseus and the Romans it appears as the headquarters of the Macedonian navy (Livy xliv. 10) and when, after the battle of Pydna (168

B.C.), the Romans divided the conquered territory into four districts, it became the capital of the second of these (Livy xlv.29), while later, after the organization of the single Roman province of Macedonia in 146 B.C., it was the seat of the governor and thus practically the capital of the whole province. In 58 B.C. Cicero spent the greater part of his exile there, at the house of the quaestor Plancius (Pro Plancio 41, 99; Epistle Ad Att, iii.8-21). In the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Thessalonica took the senatorial side and formed one of Pompey's chief bases (49-48 B.C.), but in the final struggle of the republic, six years later, it proved loyal to Antony and Octavian, and was rewarded by receiving the status and privileges of a "free city" (Pliny, NH, iv.36). Strabo, writing in the reign of Augustus, speaks of it as the most populous town in Macedonia and the metropolis of the province (vii.323, 330), and about the same time the poet Antipater, himself a native of Thessalonica, refers to the city as "mother of all Macedon" (Jacobs, Anthol. Graec., II, p. 98, number 14); in the 2nd century of our era Lucian mentions it as the greatest city of Macedonia (Asinus, 46). It was important, not only as a harbor with a large import and export trade, but also as the principal station on the great Via Egnatia, the highway from the Adriatic to the Hellespont.

3. Paul's Visit:

Paul visited the town, together with Silas and Timothy, on his 2nd missionary journey. He had been at Philippi, and traveled thence by the Egnatian Road, passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way ([Acts 17:1](#)). He found at Thessalonica a synagogue of the Jews, in which for three successive Sabbaths he preached the gospel, basing his message upon the types and prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures ([Acts 17:2, 3](#)). Some of the Jews became converts and a considerable number

of proselytes and Greeks, together with many women of high social standing ([Acts 17:4](#)). Among these converts were in all probability Aristarchus and Secundus, natives of Thessalonica, whom we afterward find accompanying Paul to Asia at the close of his 3rd missionary journey ([Acts 20:4](#)). The former of them was, indeed, one of the apostle's most constant companions; we find him with Paul at Ephesus ([Acts 19:29](#)) and on his journey to Rome ([Acts 27:2](#)), while in two of his Epistles, written during his captivity, Paul refers to Aristarchus as still with him, his fellow-prisoner ([Colossians 4:10](#) [Philemon 1:24](#)). Gaius, too, who is mentioned in conjunction with Aristarchus, may have been a Thessalonian ([Acts 19:29](#)). How long Paul remained at Thessalonica on his 1st visit we cannot precisely determine; certainly we are not to regard his stay there as confined to three weeks, and Ramsay suggests that it probably extended from December, 50 A.D., to May, 51 A.D. (St. Paul the Traveler, 228). In any case, we learn that the Philippians sent him assistance on two occasions during the time which he spent there ([Philippians 4:16](#)), although he was "working night and day" to maintain himself ([1 Thessalonians 2:9](#) [2 Thessalonians 3:8](#)). Paul, the great missionary strategist, must have seen that from no other center could Macedonia be permeated with the gospel so effectively as from Thessalonica ([1 Thessalonians 1:8](#)).

But his success roused the jealousy of the Jews, who raised a commotion among the dregs of the city populace ([Acts 17:5](#)). An attack was made on the house of Jason, with whom the evangelists were lodging, and when these were not found Jason himself and some of the other converts were dragged before the magistrates and accused of harboring men who had caused tumult throughout the Roman world, who maintained the existence of another king, Jesus, and acted in defiance of the imperial

decrees. The magistrates were duly alive to the seriousness of the accusation, but, since no evidence was forthcoming of illegal practices on the part of Jason or the other Christians, they released them on security ([Acts 17:5-9](#)). Foreseeing further trouble if Paul should continue his work in the town, the converts sent Paul and Silas (and possibly Timothy also) by night to Berea, which lay off the main road and is referred to by Cicero as an out-of-the-way town (*oppidum devium*: in *Pisonem* 36). The Berean Jews showed a greater readiness to examine the new teaching than those of Thessalonica, and the work of the apostle was more fruitful there, both among Jews and among Greeks ([Acts 17:10-13](#)). But the news of this success reached the Thessalonian Jews and inflamed their hostility afresh. Going to Berea, they raised a tumult there also, and made it necessary for Paul to leave the town and go to Athens ([Acts 17:14, 15](#)).

Several points in this account are noteworthy as illustrating the strict accuracy of the narrative of the Acts. Philippi was a Roman town, military rather than commercial; hence, we find but few Jews there and no synagogue; the magistrates bear the title of praetors ([Acts 16:20, 22, 35, 36, 38](#) the Revised Version margin) and are attended by lictors ([Acts 16:35, 38](#) the Revised Version margin); Paul and Silas are charged with the introduction of customs which Romans may not observe ([Acts 16:21](#)); they are beaten with rods ([Acts 16:22](#)) and appeal to their privileges as Roman citizens (16:37, 38). At Thessalonica all is changed. We are here in a Greek commercial city and a seaport, a "free city," moreover, enjoying a certain amount of autonomy and its own constitution. Here we find a large number of resident Jews and a synagogue. The charge against Paul is that of trying to replace Caesar by another king; the rioters wish to bring him before "the people," i.e. the popular assembly characteristic of Greek states, and the magistrates of the city bear the Greek name of

politarchs ([Acts 17:5-9](#)). This title occurs nowhere in Greek literature, but its correctness is proved beyond possibility of question by its occurrence in a number of inscriptions of this period, which have come to light in Thessalonica and the neighborhood, and will be found collected in AJT (1898, 598) and in M. G. Dimitzas, (Makedonia), 422;. Among them the most famous is the inscription engraved on the arch which stood at the western end of the main street of Salonica and was called the Vardar Gate. The arch itself, which was perhaps erected to commemorate the victory of Philippi, though some authorities assign it to a later date, has been removed, and the inscription is now in the British Museum (CIG, 1967; Leake, Northern Greece, III, 236; Le Bas, Voyage archeologique, number 1357; Vaux, Trans. Royal Soc. Lit., VIII, 528). This proves that the politarchs were six in number, and it is a curious coincidence that in it occur the names Sosipater, Gaius and Secundus, which are borne by three Macedonian converts, of whom the first two were probably Thessalonians, the last certainly.

4. The Thessalonian Church:

The Thessalonian church was a strong and flourishing one, composed of Gentiles rather than of Jews, if we may judge from the tone of the two Epistles addressed to its members, the absence of quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament, and the phrase "Ye turned unto God from idols" ([1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); compare also 2:14). These, by common consent the earliest of Paul's Epistles, show us that the apostle was eager to revisit Thessalonica very soon after his enforced departure: "once and again" the desire to return was strong in him, but "Satan hindered" him ([1 Thessalonians 2:18](#))-a reference probably to the danger and loss in which such a step would involve Jason and the other leading converts.

But though himself prevented from continuing his work at Thessalonica, he sent Timothy from Athens to visit the church and confirm the faith of the Christians amid their hardships and persecutions ([1 Thessalonians 3:2-10](#)). The favorable report brought back by Timothy was a great comfort to Paul, and at the same time intensified his longing to see his converts again ([1 Thessalonians 3:10, 11](#)). This desire was to be fulfilled more than once. Almost certainly Paul returned there on his 3rd missionary journey, both on his way to Greece ([Acts 20:1](#)) and again while he was going thence to Jerusalem ([Acts 20:3](#)); it is on this latter occasion that we hear of Aristarchus and Secundus accompanying him ([Acts 20:4](#)). Probably Paul was again in Thessalonica after his first imprisonment. From the Epistle to the Philippians ([Acts 1:26](#); [Acts 2:24](#)), written during his captivity, we learn that his intention was to revisit Philippi if possible, and [1 Timothy 1:3](#) records a subsequent journey to Macedonia, in the course of which the apostle may well have made a longer or shorter stay at Thessalonica. The only other mention of the town in the New Testament occurs in [2 Timothy 4:10](#), where Paul writes that Demas has forsaken him and has gone there. Whether Demas was a Thessalonian, as some have supposed, cannot be determined.

Bible Commentary Introduction: (This one volume commentary was prepared by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown and published in 1871)

INTRODUCTION

Its GENUINENESS is attested by POLYCARP [AD 70-155] [Epistle to the Philippians, 11], who alludes to 2 Thessalonians 3:15 JUSTIN MARTYR [100?- died in 165 AD][Dialogue with Trypho, p. 193.32], alludes to 2 Thessalonians 2:3 [Against Heresies, 7.2] quotes 2 Thessalonians 2:8 CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA [150-215 AD] [Miscellanies, 1.5, p. 554; The

Instructor, 1.17], quotes 2 Thessalonians 3:2 TERTULLIAN [160-240 AD] [On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 24] quotes 2 Thessalonians 2:1 2 Thessalonians 2:2

DESIGN.--The accounts from Thessalonica, after the sending of the first Epistle, represented the faith and love of the Christians there as on the increase; and their constancy amidst persecutions unshaken. One error of doctrine, however, resulting in practical evil, had sprung up among them. The apostle's description of Christ's sudden second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13 its being at any time, led them to believe it was actually at hand. Some professed to know by "the Spirit" (2 Thessalonians 2:2 others alleged that Paul had said so when with them. A letter, too, purporting to be from the apostle to that effect, seems to have been circulated among them. (That 2 Thessalonians 2:2 rather than to Paul's first Epistle, appears likely from the statement, 2 Thessalonians 3:17 genuine letters might be known). Hence some neglected their daily business and threw themselves on the charity of others, as if their sole duty was to wait for the coming of the Lord. This error, therefore, needed rectifying, and forms a leading topic of the second Epistle. He in it tells them (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 come, there must first be a great apostasy, and the Man of Sin must be revealed; and that the Lord's sudden coming is no ground for neglecting daily business; that to do so would only bring scandal on the Church, and was contrary to his own practice among them (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 disorderly professors (2 Thessalonians 3:6 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15 ions of the Thessalonians' faith, love, and patience, amidst persecutions. (2) 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 and the previous rise and downfall of the Man of Sin foretold. (3) 2 Thessalonians 3:1-16 with prayers for them to the God of peace, followed by his autograph salutation and benediction.

DATE OF WRITING.--AS the Epistle is written in the joint names of Timothy and Silas, as well as his own, and as these were with him while at Corinth, and not with him for a long time subsequently to his having left that city (compare Acts 18:18 Silas, it is doubtful whether he was ever subsequently with Paul), it follows, the place of writing must have been Corinth, and the date, during the one "year and six months" of his stay there, Acts 18:11 (namely, beginning with the autumn of A.D. 52, and ending with the spring of A.D. 54), say about six months after his first Epistle, early in A.D. 53.

STYLE.--The style is not different from that of most of Paul's other writings, except in the prophetic portion of it (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 which is distinguished from them in subject matter. As is usual in his more solemn passages (for instance, in the denunciatory and prophetic portions of his Epistles, for example, compare Colossians 2:8 Colossians 2:16 2 Thessalonians 2:3 2 Thessalonians 2:8 2 Thessalonians 2:10 As the former Epistle dwells mostly on the second Advent in its aspect of glory to the sleeping and the living saints (1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:28 this Epistle dwells mostly on it in its aspect of everlasting destruction to the wicked and him who shall be the final consummation of wickedness, the Man of Sin. So far was Paul from laboring under an erroneous impression as to Christ's speedy coming, when he wrote his first Epistle (which rationalists impute to him), that he had distinctly told them, when he was with them, the same truths as to the apostasy being about first to arise, which he now insists upon in this second Epistle (2 Thessalonians 2:5 the two Epistles, confirming the genuineness of the latter. Thus, compare 2 Thessalonians 3:2 "coming after the working of Satan," with 1 Thessalonians 2:18 ; 3:5 incipient work as the hinderer of the Gospel, and the tempter, appears; again, mild warning is enjoined, 1 Thessalonians

5:14 second Epistle, when the evil had grown worse, stricter discipline (2 Thessalonians 3:6 2 Thessalonians 3:14

Paul probably visited Thessalonica on his way to Asia subsequently (Acts 20:4 former became his "companion in travel" and shared with him his perils at Ephesus, also those of his shipwreck, and was his "fellow prisoner" at Rome (Acts 27:2 ; Colossians 4:10 ; Philemon 1:24 bishop of Apamea.

Good Trustworthy Online Resources on 2 Thessalonians:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/2-thessalonians-introduction/#overview>

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/nas/2-thessalonians/>

From ESV Study Bible:

Author

Although some scholars today have questioned Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians, the unanimous testimony of the early church fathers supports Pauline authorship. The main reasons given by those who question Pauline authorship include:

1. The eschatology of 2 Thessalonians is regarded as different from that of 1 Thessalonians. Specifically, the sudden/imminent expectation of Christ's return in [1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11](#) is said to

be inconsistent with the requirement in [2 Thessalonians 2:1–12](#) that specific signs must first take place.

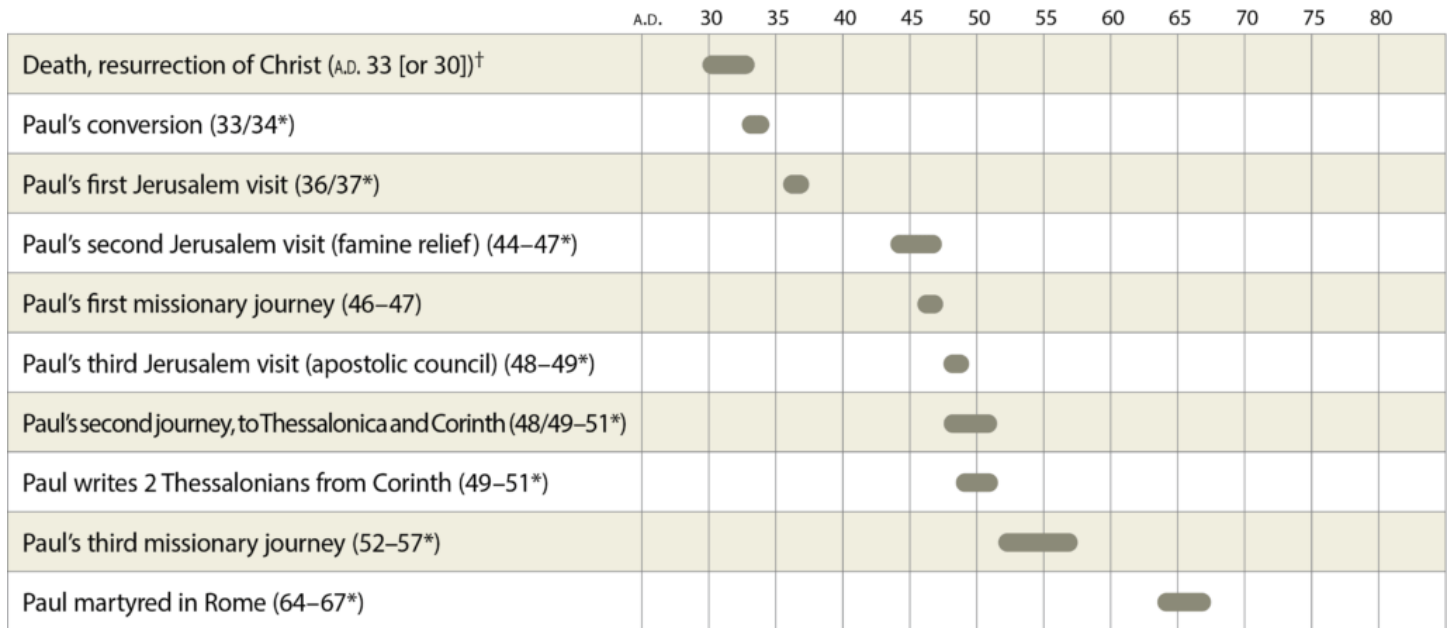
2. The many commonalities between 1 and 2 Thessalonians are alleged to reflect literary dependence, which is regarded as inconsistent with Paul's authorship of both.
3. Second Thessalonians supposedly has a colder tone than 1 Thessalonians.
4. [Second Thessalonians 2:2](#) and [3:17](#) are thought to make best sense if written by a pseudonymous author.

A careful evaluation of these objections, however, supports the conclusion that Paul was in fact the writer of 2 Thessalonians. The duplicity entailed in the forgery hypothesis (see [2 Thess. 3:17](#)) is hardly credible. In addition, the above objections can be readily refuted:

1. Both letters portray the second coming as an unwelcome and sudden surprise for unbelievers ([1 Thess. 5:2–3](#); [2 Thess. 2:8–12](#)) but an anticipated and welcome event for those who are in Christ ([1 Thess. 5:4–8](#); [2 Thess. 1:6–10](#); [2:13–17](#)). Moreover, certain events precede the Lord's return in [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#) as well as [2 Thessalonians 2:3–4](#), [9–10](#), and imminence can be seen both in [1 Thessalonians 4:15–17](#) and in [2 Thessalonians 1:7](#), [10](#); [2:1](#). A sudden and imminent eschaton was regarded as compatible with signs in Jewish and early Christian writings (e.g., Matthew 24–25).
2. Paul probably wrote 2 Thessalonians shortly after 1 Thessalonians, and may have referred to a copy of it.
3. The idea of a colder tone in 2 Thessalonians is exaggerated (see [Genre](#)).

Date

Second Thessalonians was probably penned from Corinth in A.D. 49–51, shortly after 1 Thessalonians.



* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; [†] see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Themes

The theme of the second coming of Jesus dominates 2 Thessalonians just as it dominated 1 Thessalonians. Jesus' coming will be preceded by an "apostasy" (or rebellion) and by the revelation of the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3). When Jesus comes, he will defeat this rebellious world ruler (2 Thess. 2:8) and bring justice to oppressed Christians, and wrath to their persecutors and to unbelievers in general (2 Thess. 1:5–10; 2:9–15).

1. God's righteous judgment will be fully manifest when Jesus returns. At that time unbelievers will be condemned and believers will be saved. 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10; 2:9–14
2. Christians will share Christ's glory. 2 Thessalonians 1:10, 12; 2:14

3. The lawless one's revelation and humanity's final rebellion are prerequisites for Jesus' second coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, 9–12
4. The lawless one will deceive all those who have rejected the gospel, guaranteeing their condemnation when Jesus returns. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6–12
5. Christians must not exploit the charity of fellow Christians. 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15

Background

Some have proposed that 2 Thessalonians preceded 1 Thessalonians, but 2 Thessalonians 2:15 rules this out. Others have postulated that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians for a Jewish group within the church or even to the Philippians, but such hypotheses are in tension with 2 Thessalonians 1:1. Probably Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians soon after dispatching 1 Thessalonians, because he had received a report (2 Thess. 3:11) that the situation at Thessalonica had taken a surprising turn.

The Thessalonian church had accepted the strange claim that “the day of the Lord has come” (2 Thess. 2:1–2). How could they have thought this? Some think they spiritualized the concept of the day of the Lord, but Paul's argumentation seems inconsistent with this. Others postulate that they thought that tribulation was part of the day of the Lord and that it had begun, and consequently the second coming was imminent. However, Paul assumes that they knew the second coming occurred at the same time as the coming of the day of the Lord. As strange as it may seem, the Thessalonians may simply have fallen victim to the bizarre notion that the day of the Lord, understood in its normal sense, had come. As a result they were shaken and frightened (2 Thess. 2:2). The

Thessalonians were also undergoing persecution (2 Thess. 1:4), which may have exacerbated their confusion about the end. Furthermore, the community had a problem with idlers refusing to work (2 Thess. 3:6–15). They may have stopped working to await and preach the second coming, but evidence for connecting the problems in this way is lacking. Lazy Christians may simply have been exploiting wealthier Christians' generosity in order to avoid work.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians (1) to reassure those terrified by the thought that the day of the Lord had come (2 Thess. 2:1–3:5), (2) to strengthen the Thessalonians in the face of unremitting persecution (2 Thess. 1:3–12), and (3) to deal with the problem of some of the church members refusing to earn their own living (2 Thess. 3:6–15).