

## I Thessalonians - Introduction

Thessalonica was built by Cassander, a general of Alexander the Great, in 315 b.c. near the site of an ancient city called Therma, named for the hot springs in the area. He named the city after his wife, Thessalonica, who also was the half sister of Alexander. In 168 b.c., the Romans conquered the area and divided Macedonia into four districts and named Thessalonica as the capital of one them. Later in 146 b.c. the Romans reorganized Macedonia, combining the four districts into one new province, and naming Thessalonica as the capital. In 42 b.c. Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) and Mark Antony gave it the status of a free city for the Thessalonians' help in defeating their adversaries Brutus and Cassius—self rule with no Roman army garrisoned there. They operated like a Greek city-state. They elected their officials: 5 or 6 politarchs, a senate and a public assembly. The Egnatian Way, the important road that led from Rome to the Orient, went through Thessalonica, made it a vital center for trade, cultural exchange, etc... At the time of Paul there were probably 200,000 people living there, thus it was on the same level as Ephesus and Corinth. In this city there were many Jewish businessmen, and so there was a synagogue, and it was very influential. The synagogue was always the first place Paul went when he was beginning ministry in a city.

Our study of the two letters written to the Thessalonians actually begins in the book of Acts, in order to understand Paul's history with them, and to set the stage for his letter to them, written from Corinth.

Macedonia (northern Greece, includes Neapolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.)

This is the occasion of Paul's second missionary journey, about 50 a.d. He has a new ministry partner, Silas, and he meets Timothy in Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1) In Acts 16:6-10 we see how the Holy Spirit directs Paul into position, then Paul has a vision of a man of Macedonia pleading with him to come to Macedonia and help them (Acts 16:9,10) We then follow Paul to Philippi where he and Silas are thrust into jail, after being accused of teaching customs which were not lawful, especially violating Roman law (Acts 16:20-24). After God miraculously opened the prison doors, setting Paul and Silas free, they ministered to the keeper of the prison and his household, were then set free by the magistrates, and asked to leave the city. Their next stop was Thessalonica.

(Paul called by Christ in 37 a.d., spent time in Damascus learning and declaring the word of the Lord, passed through Jerusalem in 39 a.d. for about 15 days, and then left Tarsus where he spent about ten years until Barnabas came to get him for ministry in Antioch. First Missionary journey was probably between 47-48 a.d.)

Act. 17:1-15 gives an account of the apostle's experience in Thessalonica. Verse 3 mentions 3 sabbaths, which would indicate that he was there for at least 3 weeks, but given other activities that we learn about, he was probably there for at least 6 months. JASON, is an important name because it is probably from his home that Paul continued to minister the gospel after he was asked to leave the city. Evil men were hired to lie and say Paul was breaking Roman law. Since the Thessalonians did not want to lose their status as a free city, they had to give the charges consideration. But they found them to be false.