
The Thessalonian Letters

Introduction

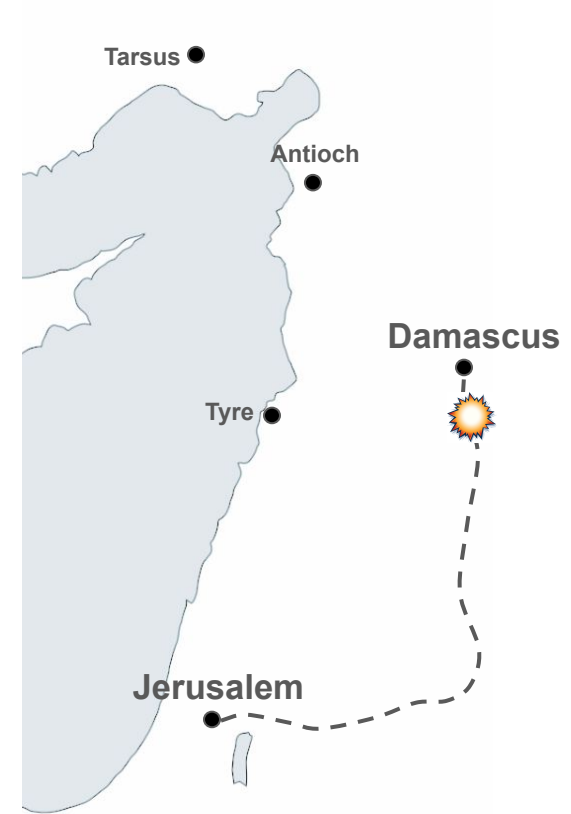


Steve Lewis

www.SpiritAndTruth.org

Conversion of the apostle Paul

- “Saul of Tarsus” was the fiercest persecutor of the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3).
- Encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-18). “Immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues” as the Messiah (Acts 9:20).
- The Jews in Damascus plotted to kill him, but he escaped to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23).
- The Hellenistic Jews plotted to kill him, so the church sent him away to Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:29-30).



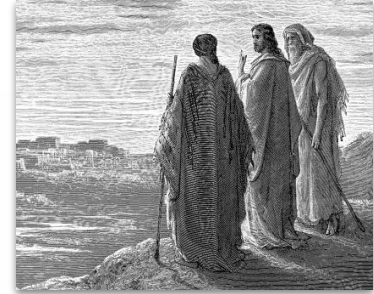
The church in Antioch of Syria

- Antioch in Syria was one of the largest cities in the Roman empire and a vibrant church was started there.
- Barnabas was sent to teach them and he recruited Saul to join him there.
- The first missionary team was sent to start churches on Cyprus and in the Roman province of southern Galatia.



Severe opposition and a second missionary journey

- There was severe opposition from unbelieving Jews during the first missionary journey.
- After returning to Antioch in Syria, the church commissioned a second missionary journey.
- Paul chose Silas and traveled by land to visit all the new churches.
- At Lystra a young believer named Timothy joined their team.



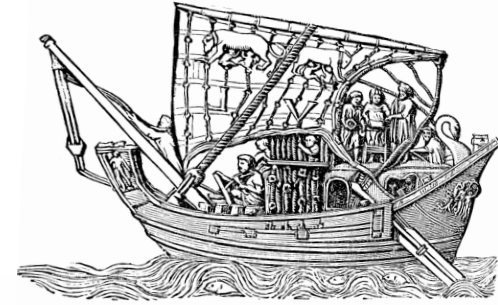
God's timing for sharing the gospel in Macedonia

- “Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word” in Asia or Bithynia (Acts 16:6-8).
- At Troas the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, so they set sail for the continent of Europe.



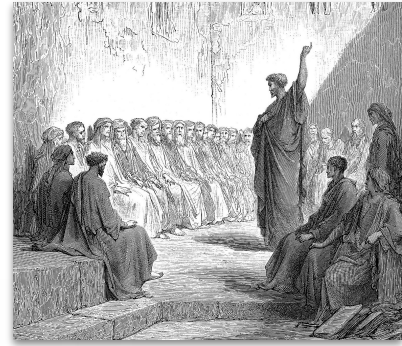
The gospel comes to Philippi

- Philippi was a Roman colony without a Jewish synagogue, but an exciting church was started.
- Paul healed a demon-possessed girl, but her Roman masters had Paul arrested on religious charges.
- Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, but led their jailer to Christ; all charges were dropped.
- Traveled west on the *Via Egnatia* highway toward Thessalonica.



The ministry in Thessalonica

- Largest seaport on the northern Aegean Sea; a Greek “free city” with a large Jewish population.
- Taught in the synagogue for three Sabbaths and won many converts to start a church there.
- Unbelieving Jews formed a mob and brought political charges against Paul; his hosts posted a bond to the city authorities.
- Paul was sent away by night to Berea (Acts 17:10).



The gospel comes to Berea

- Paul taught in the synagogue and they verified his message by studying the Scriptures for themselves.
- Many Jews put their faith in Christ, along with several prominent Greeks.
- Unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica stirred up the crowds; the Bereans took Paul to Athens (Acts 17:10-15).



Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2)

- Isaiah 7:1-17 He will be born of a virgin.
- Isaiah 11:1-2 He will be born from the line of Jesse, David’s father.
- Isaiah 42:1-8 He will come in meekness to bring blessing for both Jews and Gentiles.
- Isaiah 49:1-8 He will first be rejected by His people but will one day be accepted.
- Isaiah 50:5-7 He will be despised, humiliated, and spit upon.
- Isaiah 52:14 He will be beaten and disfigured.
- Isaiah 53:1-12 He will be lowly in appearance, despised and afflicted, experiencing sorrows and grief; His body will be scourged and pierced, and He will be considered a transgressor; He will be the righteous substitute to suffer the penalty for our iniquities in our place; He will be rejected and executed by His own people; He will be put to death among wicked men, but buried in a rich man’s tomb.
- Micah 5:2 He will be born in Bethlehem, but His existence is from eternity past.
- Zechariah 9:9 He will come in humility, riding on a donkey.
- Zechariah 12:10 He will be rejected by His people and His body will be pierced.
- Psalm 22:1-18 In death His hands and feet will be pierced; He will be forsaken by God, and mocked by His own people; onlookers will cast lots for His clothing.

Sources of opposition

- Paul's human opponents were motivated by jealousy, power, position, privilege, and prestige. People in power want nothing more than to remain in power.
- Spiritual opposition:
"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"
(Eph 6:11-12).

Sources of truth

- As well as the existing Jewish Scriptures, Paul and the other apostles and prophets were being given new revelation for the church age.
- A surprising amount of biblical knowledge was shared in a very short period of time while Paul was with the new believers in Thessalonica.

Paul's concern for the believers

- After being torn away from them, Paul was constantly concerned for the new Thessalonian believers.
- Timothy finally joined Paul in Corinth and shared an encouraging report, so Paul was relieved and filled with praise to God as he began to compose his letter.
- He wrote affectionately, as a spiritual father to his spiritual children.

