

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

& The Introduction to New Testament Letters: Reading Questions

Directions: Answer the questions below on a sheet of loose-leaf paper. Complete sentences are not necessary, only complete answers.

Intro to New Testament Letters (read it- on the back of this sheet)

1. How many letters are there in the New Testament?
2. In the NT letters, where does one find the identity of the sender(s) and the recipients?
3. What typically follows the Greeting in NT letters?
4. What is provided in the body of the letters?
5. How many of the letters in the NT have been traditionally attributed to Paul?
6. Of those, which one does not actually claim to be written by Paul?
7. List the "Captivity Epistles." Why are they given this name?
8. List the "Pastoral Epistles." Why are they given this name?
9. How are the letters of Paul arranged in the NT?
10. What are the letters that were not attributed to Paul called? How many are there?
11. Three of these letters are closely related to what gospel?

1 Thessalonians: Introduction

12. Why did Paul leave Thessalonica?
13. Who did Paul send back to Thessalonica to check on the church there?
14. When did Paul probably write 1 Thessalonians?
15. Why did Paul feel the need to write this letter?

1 Thess 1

16. Who are the senders of this letter?
17. In 1:3, Paul first mentions the three "theological virtues." What are they?
18. When Paul first visited Thessalonica, how did the Thessalonians "receive the word"?
19. In 1:10, Paul mentions three important things that he believes about Jesus. What are they?

1 Thess 2

20. What happened to Paul and those who were traveling with him in Philippi?
21. Paul says that when he and his traveling companions were in Thessalonica, they were "determined to share" not just the gospel, but what?
22. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they have become "imitators" of what church? How are they "imitating" them?
23. What prevented Paul from going to Thessalonica on more than one occasion?

1 Thess 3

24. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?
25. Who did he send to the Thessalonians to "strengthen and encourage" them?
26. When Paul was with the Thessalonians, what did he warn them about "in advance"?
27. What was Paul afraid had happened in Thessalonica that necessitated this letter?
28. What did Paul learn about the community from the person he sent to strengthen them?

1 Thess 4

29. Paul quotes one of Jesus' most famous teachings in this chapter (although he credits it to God). What is it?
30. How does Paul tell the Thessalonians to "work"? Why?
31. Why, apparently, were some of the Thessalonians "grieving"?
32. How does Paul respond to their grieving?
33. In this passage, Paul distinguishes between two groups that will "rise up" to meet the Lord. What are the two groups?
34. Of which group did Paul consider himself to be a member?
35. What does this tell you about when Paul believed Jesus would return to meet those who were "in Christ"?

1 Thess 5

36. According to Paul, when(or how) will the "day of the Lord" come? What does this mean?
37. In this chapter, Paul uses a metaphor to describe believers and non-believers. What is the metaphor? Where does it come from (what concept we have discussed in class)?
38. In 5:8, Paul mentions those theological virtues again. What are they?
39. What does Paul tell the Thessalonians to not "quench"?
40. What does Paul tell the Thessalonians to not "despise"?

Introduction to New Testament Letters

(from the New American Bible Online)

In the New Testament canon, between the Acts of the Apostles and Revelation, there are twenty-one documents that take the form of letters or epistles. Most of these are actual letters, but some are more like treatises in the guise of letters. In a few cases even some of the more obvious elements of the letter form are absent; see the Introductions to Hebrews and to 1 John.

The virtually standard form found in these documents, though with some variation, is dependent upon the conventions of letter writing common in the ancient world, but these were modified to suit the purposes of Christian writers. The New Testament letters usually begin with a greeting including an identification of the sender or senders and of the recipients. Next comes a prayer, usually in the form of a thanksgiving. The body of the letter provides an exposition of Christian teaching, usually provoked by concrete circumstances, and generally also draws conclusions regarding ethical behavior. There often follows a discussion of practical matters, such as the writer's travel plans, and the letter concludes with further advice and a formula of farewell.

Fourteen of the twenty-one letters have been traditionally attributed to Paul. One of these, the Letter to the Hebrews, does not itself claim to be the work of Paul; when it was accepted into the canon after much discussion, it was attached at the very end of the Pauline corpus. The other thirteen identify Paul as their author, but most scholars believe that some of them were actually written by his disciples; see the Introductions to Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy.

Four of the letters in the Pauline corpus (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) are called the "Captivity Epistles" because in each of them the author speaks of being in prison at the time of writing. Three others (1-2 Timothy and Titus) are known as the "Pastoral Epistles" because, addressed to individuals rather than communities, they give advice to disciples about caring for the flock. The letters of the Pauline corpus are arranged in roughly descending order of length from Romans to Philemon, with Hebrews added at the end.

The other seven letters of the New Testament that follow the Pauline corpus are collectively referred to as the "Catholic Epistles." This term, which means "universal," refers to the fact that most of them are directed not to a single Christian community, as are most of the Pauline letters, but to a wider audience; see the Introduction to the catholic letters. Three of them (1-2-3 John) are closely related to the fourth gospel and thus belong to the Johannine corpus. The catholic letters, like those of the Pauline corpus, are also arranged in roughly descending order of length, but the three Johannine letters are kept together and Jude is placed at the end.

The genuine letters of Paul are earlier in date than any of our written gospels. The dates of the other New Testament letters are more difficult to determine, but for the most part they belong to the second and third Christian generations rather than to the first.