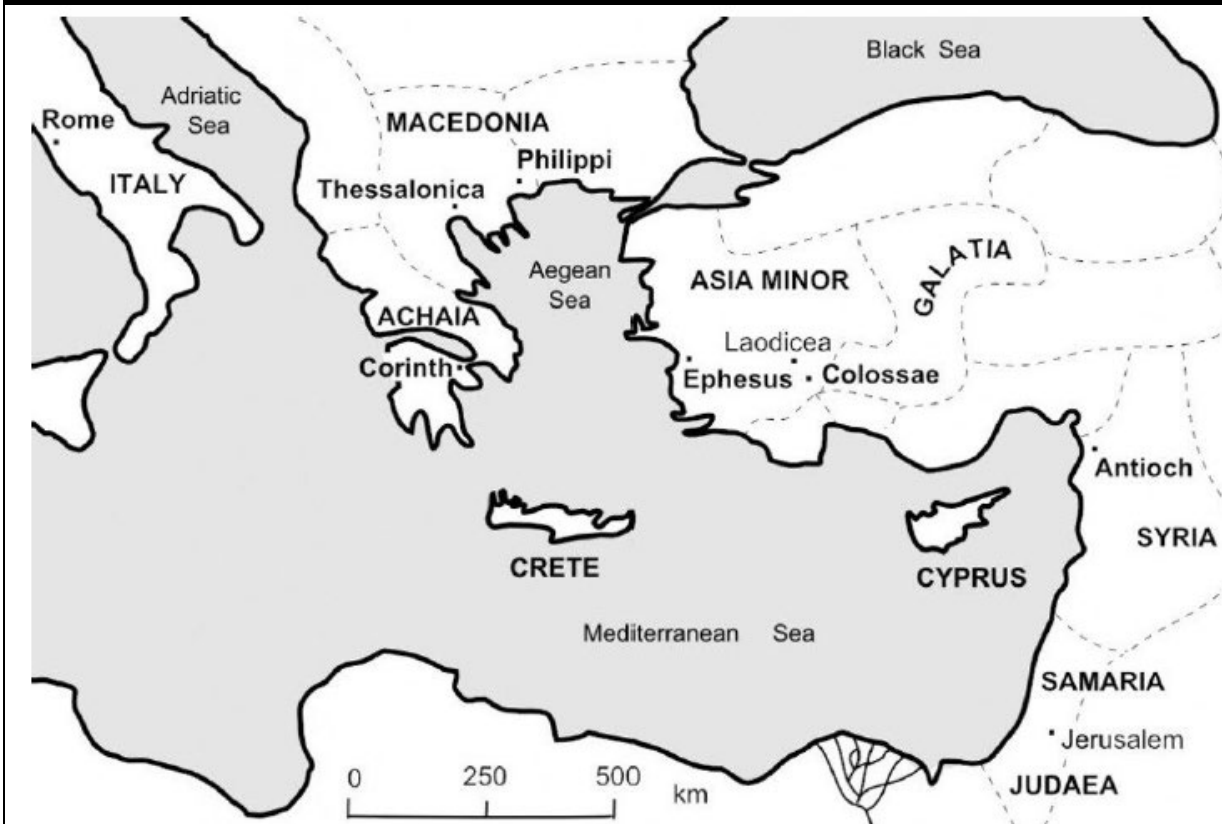


Thessalonians

"A Church is Born"

(Acts 17:1-15)

The City of Thessalonica: The city was founded in 315 BC by Cassander who named it after his wife, the stepsister of Alexander the Great. When Rome organized Macedonia into a province in 146 BC, Thessalonica was made its capital. It soon grew into the second largest city of that area, next only to Philippi which was about 100 miles to the northeast. As a free city, it had its own government, ruled by politarchs. It had a commercially strategic location. Situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, it was able to serve as a seaport for the rich agricultural plains of Macedonia. It was on the Via Egnatia, the main highway between Rome and the region north of the Aegean Sea. In commerce with the Orient, it almost rivaled Corinth and Ephesus. Its mercantile importance no doubt attracted a good number of Jews since there was an active synagogue in the city. (GROMACKI)



The Church of the Thessalonians: Paul went to Macedonia in response to a "call" from a man in Macedonia who said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us (Acts 16:9)." Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy arrived first in Philippi, where they led Lydia and her household to Christ and there established a church. Paul and Silas were arrested on false charges, beaten, and put into jail. But God delivered them, and they were able to lead the jailer and his household to faith in Christ. After encouraging the new believers, Paul and his friends left Philippi (though Luke probably stayed behind temporarily) and headed for the important city of Thessalonica. Paul and Silas arrived at Thessalonica from Philippi. Paul preached from the Scriptures at the Synagogue for three Sabbaths. The local Synagogue was the place where the Old Testament Law was known and revered. Paul could get a sympathetic hearing in the Synagogue at least

until persecution began. Paul's message was threefold: (1) Christ needed to suffer, (2) Christ needed to rise from the dead and (3) Jesus Christ is the Messiah. During this time, many people believed Paul including some Jews, some devout Greeks and influential women and a church was established. However, most Jews reacted violently and stirred up a mob within the city. The mob attacked the house of Jason, who was providing for Paul and Silas, looking for them. When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city authorities. The mob accused Paul and Silas of acting out against Caesar proclaiming Jesus as King. The mob was successful in stirring up the authorities and the people in the town, and they fined Jason and the others and let them go. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas onward to Berea.

The Tone of the Letters: Regarding 1st Thessalonians, the Christians at Thessalonica were a joy and an inspiration to Paul and became devoted followers of Christ. In reading this epistle, we get a clear glimpse of how dear Paul was to his new, struggling churches and the importance he assigned to his apostolic gift and his continuing relationship to the churches he had founded. It also shows how quickly false teachers were able to spread false rumors and errant teachings among the believers and how frustrating this was to Paul. On the other hand, Second Thessalonians is an example of how concerned the apostle Paul was about his infant churches, especially when they were influenced by false teachers. The doctrine of the rapture should have been a joyous and expectant doctrine but became a cause of alarm and confusion. The believer looks forward to being "caught up" and "gathered" to the Lord. We may suffer persecution in the meantime, but we do not fear Christ's return. In the meantime, we are to remain faithful in serving the Lord. The churches of Macedonia ultimately continued to be a blessing to Paul, as seen in his later references to their love and generosity (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
(Towns)

The Date & Time: Of the 13 letters that Paul wrote (14 if he penned the Book of Hebrews), 1st and 2nd Thessalonians were among the earliest. They were likely written in 50-52 AD and within a couple of months of each other while Paul was in Corinth.

The Letters in Contrast: The Letters were written at different times for different reasons:

1st Thessalonians

- Doctrinal in nature
- Christ comes in the air for his church
- The Day of Christ
- Can occur today
- Emphasizes comfort of believers
- Thanks God for their faith, love, and hope

2nd Thessalonians

- Corrects misunderstandings
- Christ comes to the earth with his church
- The Day of the Lord
- Can occur only after certain events
- Emphasis on judgment
- Thanks God for their faith and love

Calvary Bible Church and the Thessalonian Letters: The Constitution of the Calvary Bible Church (CBC) makes reference to Scripture recorded in the Thessalonian Letters on ten occasions. Most of these references stand in support of the Statements of Doctrinal Beliefs recorded in Article III. For instance, Article III.F, Salvation, III.N, The Second Advent of Christ, Article III.O, The Eternal State and Article III.P, Human Sexuality contain a total of seven references to either 1st or 2nd Thessalonians. The remaining three references are related to Article VII.J, Church Discipline; specifically, paragraph J dealing with how the procedures for church discipline, a process that Paul wrote about in some detail within these two letters, affect how CBC conducts itself. We should not miss an opportunity during our study of these two letters to understand why these references have been made.

Next Week: "What Every Church Should Be (1st Thessalonians 1)"