

An aerial photograph of an ancient archaeological site, likely a Roman city, showing numerous stone ruins, columns, and walls. The scene is hazy, suggesting a misty or overcast day. The ruins are scattered across a grassy field, with some larger structures and columns standing more prominently than others.

# **1 THESSALONIANS, PHILIPPIANS, PHILEMON**

# 1 THESSALONIANS

**First of Paul's letters & oldest preserved Christian document (written 50-51 CE)**

**Written to church in Thessalonica – port city**







# 1 THESSALONIANS

**Paul founded the church there & lifts it up as model for other churches to follow**

**Central message – imminent return of Jesus & to clarify events around the *Parousia* (end times)**

**Exhorts Thessalonians to be vigilant in their faith as they wait for Christ's return**



# **STRUCTURE OF 1** **THESSALONIANS**

**1:1            Salutation**

**1:2-10        Thanksgiving**

**2:1-5:11     Body**

**4:1-12        Ethical exhortations**

**4:13-5:11    Instructions about the parousia**

**5:12-22      Parenesis**

**5:23-28      Closing**

# THE PAROUSIA

***Parousia* – Greek term meaning “being by” or “being near”**

**Used to denote Second Coming of Christ - NOT about “end of the world”**

**Apparently some confusion in Thessalonian church about parousia – they thought they had missed it & some in their church had already died.**



# THE PAROUSIA

**4:13-18 - Paul lays out “order” of Parousia:**

- God will “descend from heaven”**
- The “dead in Christ” will rise**
- The living Christians will be “caught up in the clouds” with them**
- We all will be with the Lord forever**

**Not the same thing as “Rapture, which is a construct created by 18<sup>th</sup> century Bible teacher John Nelson Darby (see handout)**

# PHILIPPIANS

**Written late 50's-early 60's CE to church in Philippi, the first church in Europe.**

**Written from prison**

**Paul had strong relationship with church**

**Only church to financially support Paul's mission (thanks them in Chpt. 4)**

**Maybe a composite of various letter fragments**



# **STRUCTURE OF PHILIPPIANS**

**1:1-2          Salutation**

**1:3-11        Thanksgiving**

**1:12-4:1      Body**

**1:12-30      Paul's imprisonment**

**2:1-4:1      Christian community**

**4:2-9         Parenesis**

**4:10-23      Closing**

# PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT

**Paul wrote this from prison – either Ephesus (56 CE), Caesarea (58-60 CE) or Rome (61-63 CE)**

**1: 19-21 – Wasn't sure he'd live to see freedom – thus the letter's compassionate tone & brevity/clarity of message**

**Even so, Paul holds an optimistic outlook – imprisonment has benefited his mission (1:12ff).**



# **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

**Paul makes the case that Philippians' Christian fellowship should shape the community's identity (1:27, 2:14-15, etc.)**

**2:6-11 – Very dense & rhythmic, possibly an early Christian hymn – Christ “emptied” himself & surrendered to God's will**

**3:2-6 – Warnings against those who teach necessity of circumcision (an insert?)**

**The form of fellowship is service – Jesus as ultimate model**

# **PHILEMON**

**Paul's shortest letter – only 25 verses**

**Like Philippians, written from prison**

**Unlike Paul's other letters, written to an individual – Philemon, whom Paul apparently knew. Very personal tone**

**Deals with issue of runaway slave & receiving him back**



# PHILEMON

**Onesimus, Philemon's slave, ran away & committed some transgression (??) Paul writes on his behalf & asks Philemon to take him back.**

**Nature of transgression not specified – maybe took some \$\$? Paul offers to setting the “debt” himself.**

**Paul doesn't comment on issue of slavery itself – consistent with Greco-Roman society in which he lived.**



**2 THESSALONIANS,  
COLOSSIANS,  
EPHESIANS**



# **THE DISPUTED LETTERS OF PAUL**

**May/may not have been written by Paul (even though they used Paul's name)**

***Pseudonymity* – writing something in another's name to give it credence. Accepted practice at the time.**

**The letters: *2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus***

**Question of authorship does NOT affect authenticity of letters' content/message**

# **THE DISPUTED LETTERS OF PAUL**

## **Why disputed?**

- **Some difference in theology from what Paul normally taught**
- **Some differences in writing style/ vocabulary from what Paul normally used**
- **Events mentioned don't fit Paul's known time frame**



# 2 THESSALONIANS

**Very similar in style/substance to 1 Thess.  
(a sign of authenticity, or skilled forgery??)**

**If Pauline, written around 51-52 CE; later if not  
Pauline**

**Issue – some Christians there say that Jesus has  
already come again (“day of the Lord”) & are  
free to live as they please**

# 2 THESSALONIANS

## STRUCTURE OF LETTER:

**1:1-2** Salutation

**1:3-12** Thanksgiving

**2:1-3:5** Body – Paul’s correction of  
“apocalyptic idleness”

**3:6-15** Parenesis

**3:16-18** Closing



# CORRECTING “APOCALYPTIC IDLENESS”

Some in church had thought “day of the Lord” (2:2b) had already come – so they didn’t need to do anything (3:11)

Writer corrects this & lays out events surrounding Jesus’ return

2: 3 – different from message on same issue in 1 Thess.? (see 1 Thess. 5:2-3). Does Paul contradict himself – sign of different author?

# COLOSSIANS

Written late 50's/early 60's CE if by Paul; late 80's CE if not.

Disputed as Pauline letter for three reasons: vocabulary, style, theology.

Colossae had high concentration of various religious traditions – cults based on Roman gods, etc. Impacted church there.

Main emphasis of letters is correcting church's Christology & nature of Christ



# COLOSSIANS

## STRUCTURE OF LETTER:

<b>1:1-2</b>	<b>Salutation</b>
<b>1:3-8</b>	<b>Thanksgiving</b>
<b>1:9-3:17</b>	<b>Body</b>
<b>1:15-20</b>	<b>Christological Hymn</b>
<b>2:8-23</b>	<b>Correcting false teachings</b>
<b>3:18-4:6</b>	<b>Paranesis</b>
<b>4:7-18</b>	<b>Closing</b>

# **CHRISTOLOGICAL HYMN**

**1:15-20**

**Probably an already existing hymn familiar to  
Colossians**

**Emphasizes Christ's supremacy over not only  
church, but entire cosmos**

**Similar language/images from prologue to John's  
gospel – a “pre-existent” Christ**



# CORRECTING FALSE TEACHINGS

**2:8-23**

**Colossian church apparently impacted by area cults that emphasized a “spiritual hierarchy” where Jesus was just a point of entry.**

**Writer contends this – Jesus is the “dwelling of the fullness of deity” (vss. 9-10).**

**Throughout section, writer employs Greek/Platonic language & images to describe Christology**

# EPHESIANS

Written in late 90's CE, probably by a close disciple of Paul's.

Like *Colossians*, Pauline authorship disputed over differences in vocabulary, style, & theology.

Very "impersonal" letter – doesn't seem to be directed to anyone specifically (1:1 "In Ephesus" appears to be later addition)

More theological meditation than real letter

# EPHESIANS

## STRUCTURE OF LETTER:

**1:1-2**                      **Salutation**

**1:3-23**                    **Thanksgiving**

**2:1-3:21**                **Body**

**4:1-6:20**                **Parenesis**

**6:21-24**                **Closing**



# UNITY OF GENTILES & JEWS

Writer recounts Gentile history prior to saving grace of Christ

2:19-22 – Image of Jews & Gentiles as fellow “housemates” built on the “cornerstone” of Christ.

# UNITY OF CHURCH UNIVERSAL

**4:4-6 – Unity of church bound together in “ONE”  
(word occurs 7 times)**

**4:11-13 – Unity amidst diversity – different  
people called to do/be different things in the  
church.**

**Diversity celebrated – it is because of diversity  
that the church experiences unity in Christ.**

# **ELEVATOR SPEECH SUMMARY**

**1 THESSALONIANS – PAROUSIA**

**PHILIPPIANS – CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

**PHILEMON – TAKING SLAVE BACK**

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**2 THESSALONIANS – APOCALYPTIC IDLENESS**

**COLOSSIANS – CORRECTING FALSE TEACHINGS**

**EPHESIANS – UNITY OF CHURCH**