

Paul's 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians

Introduction

Historical Evidence

The witness of antiquity secures the authenticity of our Epistle. Ignatius (c. 50 – 98/117) in his letter to the Romans quotes from 3:5 in his final sentence of the letter (10:5) - '*Fare ye well to the end, **in the patience of Jesus Christ.***' Polycarp (69 – 155), who appears to have known of all the books of the NT, in his letter to the Philippians (11:4) quotes from 3:15 - '***do not count such as enemies***'; in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, XXXII (middle 2nd century), there is the quotation '*But if this is so, **the man of sin** must, at the shortest, reign three hundred and fifty years,*', which was repeated in the Codices Alexandrinus and Bezae versions¹ of our Epistle (2:3). According to Grant² Irenaeus (c 120 – 200) makes 9 quotes from or allusions to the text of 2 Thessalonians. Of the extant versions of the Epistle papyrus **ϐ**⁹² (c. 300) is the earliest, then follow the major Codices – Codex Sinaiticus (c. 350) being the most ancient. The Epistle is included in the Catalogue of Marcion (c. 140) and the Muratorian Canon (late 2nd century).

Reason For Writing.

Paul's first letter had answered his critics so far as his own conduct had been concerned but it had not been completely successful in calming the fears regarding those who had died prior to the presence of the visible essence of Christ. Further, and perhaps on account of the perception that the Day of the Lord would not be afar off, many had taken to idleness, and that had to be condemned. There also appears to have been extremest views imported and a fabricated epistle perporting to be from Paul. All these mishaprehensions had to be corrected.

Place and Date of Writing

Written in Corinth a few weeks or months after the first letter.

1 These Codices date from the 5th century but this variant indicates that they had a 1st / 2nd century source for this Epistle.

2 Grant, Robert M., 1965, The Formation of the New Testament, Harper & Row, New York.