

The background image shows the ruins of an ancient temple, likely the Temple of Apollo in Side, Turkey. In the foreground, there are low stone walls and a path. To the right, a prominent structure with four Corinthian columns and a pediment stands. The ruins are situated on a hillside overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. In the distance, there are mountains under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians

INTRODUCTION

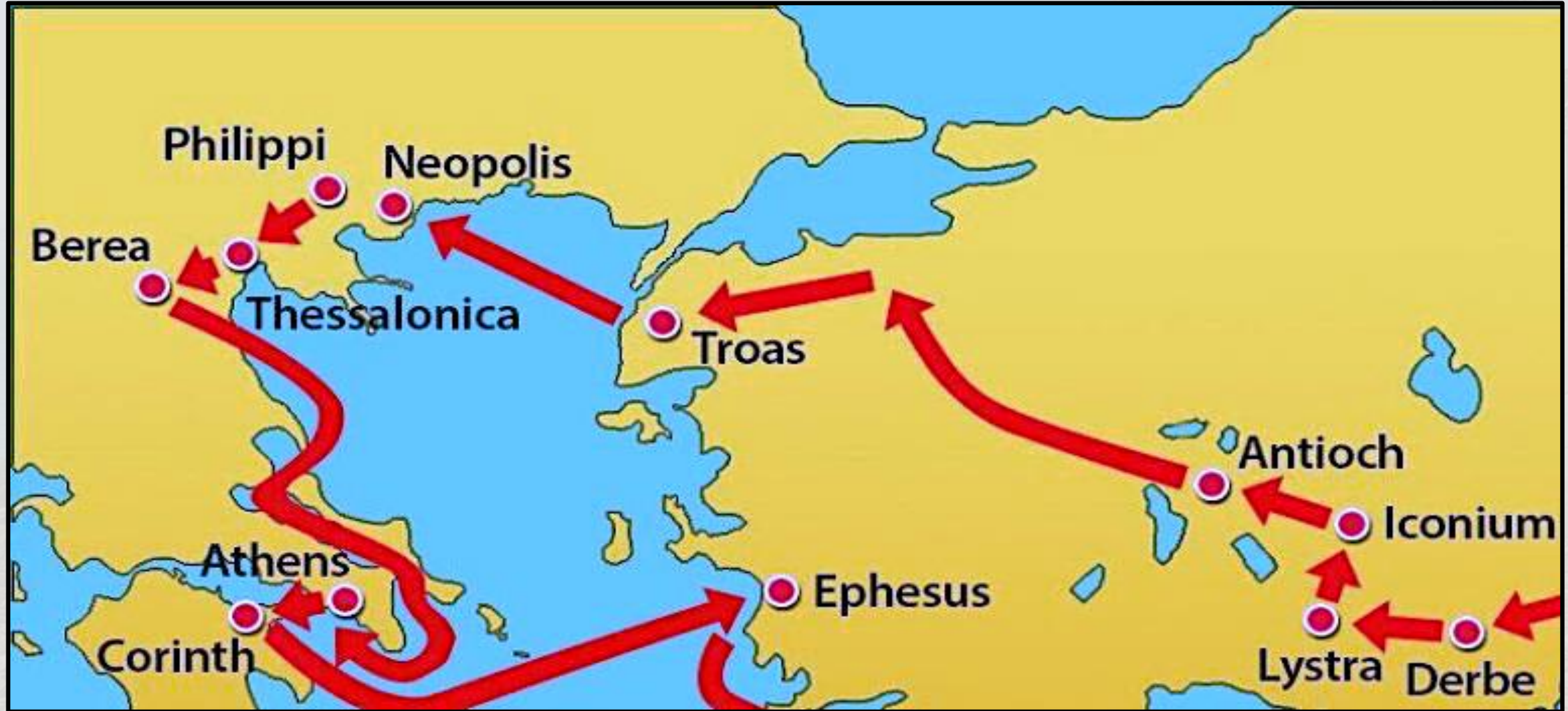
INTRODUCTION TO FIRST THESSALONIANS

Background Information on the City of Thessalonica

- It was the capital of Macedonia and one of the largest cities in Greece (100,000+/-).
- A free city under Roman rule, it governed many of its own affairs (**Acts 17:1**).
- It was in a geographically convenient location.
 - Situated on the Thermaic Gulf, making it an important commercial seaport.
 - Located on the Via Egnatia, one of the major Roman highways connecting Rome with the eastern provinces (**consider 1 Thess. 1:8**).

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 - Located on the Via Egnatia, one of the major Roman highways connecting Rome with the eastern provinces (**consider 1 Thess. 1:8**).
- The city was religiously diverse.
 - There was a Jewish synagogue in the city (**Acts 17:1**).
 - Pagan idolatry was rampant, with numerous Greek and Roman gods worshipped.
 - Many of these pagans converted to Christianity (**Acts 17:4; 1 Thess. 1:9**).
 - Emperor worship was also prevalent (**Acts 17:6-7**).

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST THESSALONIANS

Paul's Relationship with the Thessalonians

- Paul visited the city during his second missionary journey.
 - Paul, Silas, and Timothy preached the gospel there after leaving Philippi (**Acts 15:36-16:10**). Evidently, Luke did not go to Thessalonica (**Acts 17:1**).
 - Paul preached in the synagogue for three Sabbaths (**Acts 17:2**).
 - Jews, Greeks, and prominent women obeyed the gospel (**Acts 17:4**).
 - **Acts 17:2** mentions three Sabbaths elapsing, but Paul apparently stayed in the city longer than three weeks (long enough to establish a church).
 - He worked to support himself (**1 Thess. 2:9**) and received financial support (**Phil. 4:16**).
 - Paul was eventually driven out of the city (**Acts 17:5-10**).
 - While in Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to visit the church (**1 Thess. 3:1-2**).
 - Upon his return, Timothy brought good news (**Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6**).

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST THESSALONIANS

Paul's Circumstances at the Time of Writing

- Scholars generally agree the letter was likely written from Corinth in 49-51 AD (**Acts 17:10-18:1-5, 12**).
 - Paul was persecuted while in Corinth (**Acts 18:5-16; 1 Cor. 2:3**).
 - This is likely Paul's earliest inspired epistle, possibly written just a few months after the congregation was established.
 - The church was young but mature and influential (**1 Thess. 1:7-8**).
- Silas and Timothy were with Paul at the time of writing (**1 Thess. 1:1**).
 - Unable to return personally, Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica to strengthen the congregation and learn about their faith (**1 Thess. 3:1-5**).
 - Timothy reunited with Paul in Corinth, bringing encouraging news (**Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6**), which prompted Paul to send the letter.
 - Returning from Macedonia, Silas also rejoined Paul in Corinth (**Acts 18:5**).

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The Purpose of the Letter

- The second coming is the primary theme (**1:10, 2:19, 3:13, 4:16-17, 5:23**).
 - There seems to have been a need to correct misunderstandings about the second coming / resurrection, & address concerns about deceased Christians.
- Encourage brethren who endured persecution (**1:6, 2:14, 3:1-5**).
- Commend their obedience and faithfulness (**1:2-10**).
- Possibly defend Paul's ministry against false accusations (**2:1-12**).
- Exhort continued spiritual growth and sanctification (**4:1-10**).
- Encourage love and peace within the congregation (**4:9-12, 5:12-15**).
- Warn against idleness (**4:11-12, 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-12**).
- Provide practical instructions concerning Christian living (**5:12-22**).
- Assure them of God's faithfulness & encourage them to remain steadfast (**5:23-24**).

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

- **Chapter One**

- Greeting (1:1)
- Paul's Gratitude (1:2-4)
- Their Conversion (1:5-10)

- **Chapter Two**

- Paul's Ministry (2:1-12)
- The Thessalonians' Faith (2:13-16)
- Paul's Desire to See Them (2:17-20)

- **Chapter Three**

- Paul's Concern (3:1-5)
- Timothy's Good News (3:6-8)
- Paul's Prayer (3:9-13)

- **Chapter Four**

- Paul's Plea for Purity (4:1-8)
- A Loving & Laboring Life (4:9-12)
- Christ is Coming (4:13-5:11)

- **Chapter Five**

- Christ is Coming (4:13-5:11)
- Various Exhortations (5:12-22)
- Closing Remarks (5:23-28)