

I am out of the country must now, giving lectures for a tour of Greece and Turkey focused on “The Footsteps of Paul.” For the past three days we’ve been in Thessaloniki, a terrific place; tomorrow we’re off to Samos, an island near the coast of Turkey, from which we’ll make expeditions to Ephesus and Patmos (not connected with Paul, but how can we pass it up?), etc. Suffering for the cause.

In my talk to the group today, I was explaining why scholars have such difficulties knowing what Paul actually said and did. For one thing, the accounts in Acts (which give a kind of biography of Paul) may be roughly accurate in their broad picture, but there are reasons for thinking the details are problematic. That’s important because Acts is our only ancient source that claims Paul was from Tarsus, was a Roman citizen, and had three major missionary journeys. And some of the things it says about Paul are highly significant, if true – for example, that he never, personally, stopped keeping the Jewish law while on the mission field.

The other problem, as many of you will know, is that some of the letters in the NT that claim to be written by Paul were probably not. I thought this might give me an occasion for re-posting a series of blog posts from many years ago, dealing with a letter allegedly written to the Christians in the city I now find myself in, Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians was almost certainly written by Paul (basic reason: it coheres in writing style, vocabulary, theological perspective, and presupposed historical situation with the other letters almost universally acknowledged as having been written by Paul). 2 Thessalonians? Yeah, not so much.

Here is how I started broaching the problem when discussing it before, in an earlier era of the blog. In this post I give the big and simple reason for thinking the letter is pseudonymous (written by someone claiming to be Paul who was actually someone else; modern term for that, of course, is “forgery”). After this post I’ll go into more detail.

Paul himself thought the end was coming in his lifetime. Nowhere is this more clear than in one of the letters we are sure he wrote, 1 Thessalonians. Paul wrote the Christians in Thessalonica because some of them had become disturbed over the death of a number of their fellow believers. When he converted these people, Paul had taught them that the end of the age was imminent, that they were soon to enter the Kingdom when Jesus returned. But members of the congregation had died before it happened. Had they lost out on their heavenly reward? Paul writes to assure the survivors that no, even those who have died will be brought into the kingdom. In fact when Jesus returns in glory on the clouds of heaven, “the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who remain, will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air” (4:17). Read the verse carefully: Paul expects to be one of the ones who will still be alive when it happens.

He goes on to say that...

The rest of this post is for blog members only. If you haven’t joined yet, I suggest you do so soon. The end will be coming like a thief in the night. Don’t leave something left undone!

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[2 Thessalonians: When Scholars Began To Doubt It Was Authentic Homosexuality and the New Testament. Guest Post by Jeff Siker.](#)