

SEQUENCE OF THE THESSALONIAN CORRESPONDENCE

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I. 2 Thessalonians follows 1 Thessalonians.

A. So listed in all the ancient canons (even Marcion's)

The New Testament letters, however, are always arranged by length from longest to shortest per author. Curious that second (and third) epistles to the same destination should always be shorter than the first.

B. References in 2 Thessalonians apparently to a previous letter: 2:2, 15; 3:17

The references could be to a lost letter.

The references could be to a pseudonymous letter (2:3; 3:17).

The references could be to a feared or conjectured possibility.

The references could be to 1 Thessalonians.

C. The eschatology is less developed in 2 Thessalonians than in the first letter. A person would think that since Paul was trying to correct a problem in the second letter, he would deal with the subject in more detail.

?D. 2:17-3:16 contains several warm personal references while 2 Thessalonians has none. Since the letters were evidently written close together, salutations in the first letter would suffice for the second.

II. 1 Thessalonians follows 2 Thessalonians.

A. Problems are new to the author in 2 Thessalonians whereas in 1 Thessalonians seemingly everything is familiar.

B. In 2 Thessalonians 3:17 he comments that he always included a handwritten postscript in his letters. The idea is that he would supposedly have told his readers about this practice in his first correspondence with them.

(1) Paul could have drawn their attention to this practice in the second letter because of fears about pseudonymous letters that arose after he sent the earlier letter. (2) We could understand the comment as meaning that he had already done this—in the former correspondence—so they could compare the handwriting to be sure that this second letter was genuine.

C. Trials still lie ahead in 2 Thessalonians whereas in 1 Thessalonians they are already behind.

Paul may not be talking about the same trials.

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