

HOURLASS BIBLE STUDY

Introduction to Timothy 1 and 2*

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Authorship and date

Scholars generally believe that these books were not written by Paul because the vocabulary, style, and religious themes differ from Paul's writings. Rather they were written by someone wanting to communicate Paul's views on the issues in the book, although that person may not have gotten it all right. For example, the text uses Greek (Hellenistic) language and Roman Imperial references, which is not like Paul. The scholars also generally believe that the books were written after Paul's death, somewhere between 75 and 150 C.E. Evidence of this timing includes the fact that the church organization suggested in the letters did not exist in Paul's time, and also that these letters do not appear in early lists of Paul's writings. Also the writer seems to know the book of Acts, which was written 80-90 C.E. Finally, the writing style is rather controlled and precise, which is very unlike Paul's writing, and the vocabulary is not like Paul's. There is more of a sense of "works" rather than faith and grace being all important. Nevertheless, Paul was a hero in the writer's eyes.

Scholarship contradicting these points of view is less than it used to be, so there seems to be growing consensus that these are not Paul's work. Several scholars argue that Polycarp, an early Christian leader who lived in the 100s C.E., knew of and used these letters, and some argue that Polycarp was the actual author of 1 Timothy. Additionally, Irenaeus (who wrote *Against Heresies* in about 180 C.E.), includes quotes from these books. In summary, the books are difficult to date precisely.

Most scholars today think 2 Timothy was written before 1 Timothy because the church organization seems more developed in 1 Timothy. There is no sense of where the letter was written, although the people referred to in it were in Ephesus.

Purpose

First Timothy offers guidance in church administration and warnings against false teachings. The references to these false teachings are not specific, but content suggests that the false teaching included Jewish, Gnostic, and ascetic elements. The book has a feel of "the church against the world," and discusses how to deal with that situation.

Second Timothy includes more personal advice, written as a veteran pastor advising a younger pastor. It assumes that Paul is in prison, probably in Rome, and facing imminent death. Some scholars think that original fragments from Paul may be included in this letter.

That younger pastor to whom the letter is addressed, Timothy, was from Lystra in Asia Minor. He was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, and he learned Hebrew scripture as a child. His mother had become a Christian (Acts 16:1), and under her influence and his grandmother's he became a Christian before he met Paul. Timothy also traveled at some time with Paul, and he is mentioned in Romans 16:21, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 1:1, and

Philemon 1:1. Timothy is somewhat presented as an ideal church leader. As such, it may be that the letters were not written to one particular pastor, but rather than Timothy stood as a representative for all newer pastors at the time.

*Sources include Wikipedia entries on relevant topics, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: An Ecumenical Study Bible*, *The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, *The New Testament: its background, growth, and content* by Bruce M. Metzger, and *Early Christian Experience* by Gunther Bornkamm.