

I AND II THESSALONIANS

(8 Chapters of hope and encouragement)

When will Jesus return?

What happens when you die?

Will the believers who already died go to Heaven also?

What will the end of the world be like?

What about the Anti-Christ (the lawless one)?

The issues addressed in these two brief letters are very current for us now. Some people are very concerned that current events are end time events.

The Christians who received these letters expected Jesus any day. They were concerned because He had not yet come. These letters address many fears and issues which you may also be encountering.

Certainly, the letters confirm what you probably already know: The best way to be prepared for Jesus' second coming is to live a holy life now. Do not keep looking over your shoulder for new threats or for more clues of Jesus' arrival. Do Christian work now! *Work while it is yet day.* Do not stop earning a living! Relax and trust God.

Paul the apostle wrote letters to congregations. These two letters are addressed to the church in Thessalonica. This was the major city in the area of Macedonia in what is now northern Greece. It was located on the major land route around the Mediterranean Sea. The members of this congregation were among the first European converts to Christianity. You can read about

Paul's visit (with his colleagues Timothy and Silvanus) to Thessalonica in Acts 16:9-17:14.

Paul wrote the first letter shortly after he left the Thessalonians. He was in Athens or possibly he had gotten as far as Corinth. It was written about A.D. 50. It is probably the first of Paul's letters. It may be the oldest written text of the New Testament. (The Gospels were beginning to take shape as oral and written accounts of Jesus but were not yet in the completed form we have today. The oldest manuscripts of Mark are close in age.) The second letter is harder to date, but clearly continues with the same themes as the first letter.

Paul cares very deeply about this fledgling group of Christians. Are they ok? They have started off so well. Will they be ready when Jesus returns in glory? Are they unnecessarily anxious about God's plans? What is God doing and when will he do it? Well, do not worry about that. Give up immoral behavior. Love one another. Praise God. Pray. The God of peace will keep you in peace.

Are you ready for Jesus' return?

Do you know what He wants you to do in the meantime?