

INVITATION TO 2 THESSALONIANS

A short time after he wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians (p. 1573), Paul had to write to them again, to correct a false report that he'd said the day of the Lord had already come. (He most likely learned about this from whoever carried his first letter to Thessalonica, probably Timothy.) The day of the Lord was a phrase the Hebrew prophets used to describe the time when God would win a definitive victory over every opponent and reward all those who have believed. The Thessalonians' concern wasn't that this day had come and gone and they'd missed it. Rather, they were concerned that it was now present, meaning that they couldn't expect God to do anything more to deliver them from their enemies. Since they were still suffering persecutions and trials, this was very discouraging. Even before he corrects this false report, Paul reassures the Thessalonians that God will indeed pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled. (He gives this reassurance in his opening thanksgiving and prayer, where he often introduces the main themes of his letters.) Paul then corrects the report by reminding the Thessalonians what he told them when he was with them about how the day of the Lord will arrive. It seems he's about to bring his letter to a close, but he then repeats an admonition from his earlier letter (perhaps in response to a further report about their situation). He urges them at greater length not to live in idleness, but to work hard and earn their own livings. As was common at the time, most of this letter would have been written down by a scribe. But at the end, Paul adds a greeting in his own handwriting, to prove that this letter is genuinely from him. He doesn't want his name attached to any more misrepresentations of his teaching!