

1 and 2 Thessalonians

Eschatology and Final Admonitions

Interpreting the Text:

1. Paul is drawing on both Hebrew scriptures and Jesus' own teachings as he talks about the end times. Many Christians are familiar with the charge to "pray without ceasing" because "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." How do these other textual references support his claim? Why might these other references provide a source of grounding of comfort for the readers?
2. Professors Attridge and Bartlett remind us that, per Paul's instructions at the end of the letter, this would have been heard by most people rather than read. How would hearing this letter potentially change its meaning? How much could tone or inflection impact the way this letter is received?

Applying the Text:

1. The hope for the future that Paul expresses in 1 Thessalonians is not simply about the survival of the individual and restoration to life; it is also about the community and its fate. What kind of hope for the future do you have? Is that hope tied to a scripturally based timetable?
2. Paul's advice about how to behave as a Christian community relies heavily on the language of being "spirit filled." What exactly is he talking about? Does the language make sense in a contemporary environment?