

Macedonia in 167 BC and when, in 148 BC, Macedonia was made a Roman province, Thessalonica became its capital. When Paul visited it on his second journey it was the largest and most important city in Macedonia. This importance rose largely from its geographic situation--it was a major port and also lay on the Egnatian Way, the major east-west highway between Rome and Asia.

The modern city of Salonika stands on the same site making archaeological exploration somewhat difficult. A few stretches of the old city wall survive; the walls themselves are Byzantine, but they rest on foundations that are far older. An inscription from the Vardar Gate, a third century Roman arch formerly at the western entrance to the city, uses the word "politarch" as an official title. This title had been unknown and Luke's use of it in Acts 17:6 was ridiculed as one of his patently false historical inventions. Now this title is known to have been used in Thessalonica and other Macedonian cities and Luke's accuracy as an historian is vindicated.

#### Keys:

In I Thessalonians 1:4-10 Paul explains the reason(s) for his confidence in the salvation of the Thessalonian Christians and his anticipation of the future of their lives in Christ. He defends his calling and ministry in 2:7-12. The doctrinal issue of the Second Coming is summarized well in 4:13.

II Thessalonians 1:3-4 demonstrates Paul's increasing confidence in the Thessalonian Christians. The "miniature apocalypse" of 2:5-12 is a key point of this letter's doctrine as is 3:13 of its practice.

#### Study Tips:

Read through both letters several times; use another version to bring familiar texts to new life. Read about Thessalonica and Thessalonians in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. Use a concordance to look up the passages in Acts which refer to Paul's visit to and ministry in Thessalonica. With this background read these epistles again, looking especially for the main points of Paul's concern.

List all the characteristics of the Thessalonian Christians. How does Paul describe them? Find other passages on the Second Coming in Paul's writings, in the New Testament, in the entire Bible. How do these materials (in Thessalonians) fit into the larger picture? How do these teachings comfort those who have lost loved ones (1 Thess 4:18)? How does Paul describe his