WORLD OF JUSTICE CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT CHRIST

VATICAN CITY, 12 NOV 2008 (VIS) - In his general audience, held this morning in St. Peter's Square, the Pope turned his attention to St. Paul's eschatological teaching.

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians, said the Holy Father, "St. Paul speaks of the return of Jesus, an event known as the 'parusia' or advent". The saint describes this vividly "using symbolic images that nonetheless transmit a simple and profound message: 'In the end we will be with the Lord forever'. ... Our future is 'to be with the Lord'".

Benedict XVI pointed out how in his Second Letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle "changes perspective and speaks of the negative events that will precede the end. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived, he says, as if the Day of the Lord were truly imminent by some chronological calculation. ... The continuation of the Pauline text makes it clear that the coming of the Lord will be preceded by apostasy and by the appearance of a person identified only as 'the lawless one', the 'one destined for destruction', whom tradition came to identify as the Antichrist".

The Pope examined the fundamental attitudes a Christian must adopt in the face of the ultimate realities of death and the end of the world: "The first attitude", he said, "must be the certainty that Jesus rose and that, with the Father, He remains with us forever. ... Secondly, the certainty that Christ is with me; and since the future world has already begun in Christ, this gives us the certainty of hope. The future is not an area of darkness in which no-one can find their way. ... Without Christ, the future is dark even today. ... Christians know that the light of Christ is stronger and hence they experience a hope that is not vain, a hope that gives certainty and courage to face the future".