

## 22] Our Lord Will Bring Justice (Sunday, May 9, 2021)

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**Scripture:** Isaiah 2:12-22; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

### INTRODUCTION

Revenge or vengeance can be a great temptation.

Someone does something against you, and you delight in thinking about how you will get back at them and make them wish they had never sinned against you.

Men must not turn into bees and kill themselves in stinging others. – Francis Bacon

I think there are two sinful responses to evil.

In the face of evil it is sinful to:

- 1] ignore your duties and give no care or concern for the working of evil
- 2] think that God is unconcerned and seek to take matters into your own hands.

There is much in Scripture on this subject.

**Psa. 37:1** Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.  
**8** Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;  
Do not fret—*it* only *causes* harm.  
**9** For evildoers shall be cut off;  
But those who wait on the LORD,  
They shall inherit the earth.

**Psalms 73:17** Until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
*Then* I understood their end.  
**18** Surely You set them in slippery places;  
You cast them down to destruction.

**2Tim. 4:14** Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. **15** You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

We are not Buddhists who think we just need to get rid of desire and seek inner peace.

We are also not radicals or revolutionaries who think we must take matters into our own hands.

No, we must rest in God's judgment.

We continue to serve, pray, and do what God has called us to do!

A very great mistake we can make in terms of our desire to seek vengeance or justice is to think that we will handle the situation better than God will.

Our text reminds us of how foolish it would be to think this way.

No, there will be a day when perfect justice and retribution will be given.

The day of our Lord's return will be a most awesome day! We cannot now grasp the fullness of the glory and splendor that will be revealed.

That day will certainly come!

**Until then, you must trust in the total certainty and perfection of God's justice.**

First, we will consider a few more points of introduction to 2 Thessalonians and look at the connection of verse 5 and verse 6.

Second, we will focus on verses 6-10,

## 1] FURTHER INTRODUCTION AND VERSES 5 AND 6

I mentioned in our last study of 2 Thessalonians that some believe that 2 Thessalonians was written before 1 Thessalonians.<sup>1</sup>

Does it matter?

The only thing that would really change is the timing of the suffering that the believers endured.

Assuming the order of the books is what we have in our Bibles, we can say this about the persecution and difficulty that believers faced in Thessalonica.

Conflict started while Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in Thessalonica.

**1Th. 1:6** And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit

After Paul and the others left, there was continued suffering.

**1 Thess. 3:4** For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.

It appears that there was some break in the suffering and that it came again right before 2 Thessalonians was written.

**2 Thess. 1:5** *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also **suffer**;

The verb suffer in verse 5 is in the present tense.

I mentioned also in our last study that this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter deals with three main issues.

1] Some were discouraged by persecution and needed comfort and encouragement to persevere. This is the focus of the first chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Wannamaker and others have argued this.

2] There was apparently false teaching and misunderstanding related to the Lord's return. Correction was needed, which is the focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

3] There were some in the congregation who perhaps because of laziness and false teaching were ignoring God's command to work. Confrontation was needed. This we see is the focus in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter.<sup>2</sup>

As you look now at verses 5 and 6, we see two great truths brought together.

The suffering of believers in Thessalonica was proof of God's righteous judgment that they be counted worthy of the kingdom of God and to suffer for it.

Verse 6 then states, it is also a righteous thing for God to bring vindication for His people.

This is a very important lesson to learn.

True suffering for the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ is not the result of God losing control or power, but a **manifestation of God's righteous rule**.

**Acts 5:41** So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

This understanding is not what we deduce in our own logic and use of reason.

We also must believe by faith and with absolute confidence that God will bring perfect justice.

God does bring judgment and vindication for His people in this life, but not always as we might desire it.

The ultimate justice, however, will come when our Lord returns in power, glory, and splendor that has never been witnessed before!

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<sup>2</sup> Summary taken from the MacArthur Study Bible.

You must trust in the total certainty and perfection of God's justice.

## 2] THE AWESOME DAY OF OUR LORD'S RETURN AND THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, vv. 6-10

One commentator calls these verses a **Hymn of the Second Coming**.<sup>3</sup>

There is a richness and rhythm to the language.

How did Paul come to write this way and understand what the second coming would look like?

We can say from the Scriptures – the OT and NT.

Let's focus on verses 6 and 7 first.

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be a **righteous repayment** and the bringing of true **rest**.

It is righteous that God will bring a repayment for the trouble that the Thessalonians were experiencing.

Repay – used 7 times in the NT.

**Rom. 12:19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.

In verses 6 and 7 you have the words trouble, tribulation, and troubled.

These words all share the same root in Greek.

Most often you have the noun form, tribulation, but there is a verb form that is used here in verses 6 and 7 - tribulate and tribulated would be more literal translations.

God is righteous and will bring a perfect repayment.

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<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris sharing the comments of someone named Way. Morris, 119.

God is righteous and will also give His people rest.

We might ask the question, how could the return of Jesus Christ bring rest to the Thessalonians when they have been dead for going on two thousand years?

I think we can respond in two ways.

First, when Paul wrote, he did not know the timing of the Lord's return neither do we.

Vern Poythress wrote:

“Neither Paul nor the Thessalonians knew how far away the second coming might be. For all they knew, they might be alive when the Lord returned (1 Thess 4:15, 18; 1 Cor 15:51). Hence it is perfectly appropriate for them to look forward to the second coming as the time of vengeance and vindication.”<sup>4</sup>

But aside from the issue of timing we can also say this.

**What wicked men suffer in this life is nothing in comparison to the perfect judgment that God will one day bring.**

So, the ultimate rest in the sense of justice is not the death of the believer but the justice that will one day come when our Lord returns.

Verse 7 speaks of the revealing of the Lord Jesus.

This is the word *apokalypsei*, the basis for our English word apocalypse.

The Book of Revelation is the *Apokalypsis* of Jesus Christ.

There is a coming day when the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed in the fullness of His glory.

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<sup>4</sup> “2 Thessalonians 1 Supports Amillennialism.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 4 (December 1994): 536-537.

Verse 10 uses the verb comes.

Chapter 2 uses the verb coming in verse 1 and verse 8, *parousia*.

Other passages also use the word revelation to describe the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and its connection with the Day of Judgment.

**Rom. 2:5** But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

**1Pet. 1:13** Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

**1Pet. 4:13** but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

There is a day coming when the full glory of the Lord Jesus Christ coming with innumerable angels will be revealed.

We cannot even begin to grasp how awesome this day will be.

We must often think about this day.

This truth is given to encourage us to press on in our service for our King!

Despite whatever we may face, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!

Verses 8 and 9 further speak of the fearsome judgment that will be brought.

There are several OT passages connected with the language in these verses.

**Jer. 10:25** Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You,  
And on the families who do not call on Your name;  
For they have eaten up Jacob,  
Devoured him and consumed him,  
And made his dwelling place desolate.

**Is. 66:15** For behold, the LORD will come with fire  
And with His chariots, like a whirlwind,  
To render His anger with fury,  
And His rebuke with flames of fire.

Is the flaming fire a description of the mighty presence of our Lord or connected with the judgment that He will bring?

Likely this is an expression of judgment as we see from Isaiah 66:15.

The vengeance is poured out on those who:

1] do not know God

2] do not obey / give full surrender to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

Some suggest that these two groups represent Jews and Gentiles.

I am not sure we have to look for two different groups but rather these two descriptions go together.<sup>5</sup>

**Those who do not know God are those who do not believe the gospel.**

I am sure that there are so many who find this entirely revolting that those who do not know God and believe the gospel will be punished.

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<sup>5</sup> Morris, 120.

This is at the heart of man-centered opinion.

Who gets to set the standard?

Will it be you or God?

I hope we know how deeply humbling this truth is, because in the end it is God's choice, God's will.

We so desperately want to hold to man having the final say.

Verse 9 details the horrible nature of eternal punishment.

There are many who also hate the idea of eternal punishment.

Oh, it can't mean forever, it must mean annihilation or maybe just suffering for a time.

That is not the description that is found in Scripture no matter how much men protest.

First, the word eternal is the same word used for eternal life and here for eternal destruction.

Second, this passage like several others does not describe the end of existence but rather a horrible, unending punishment.

We should also observe here the greatest horror of eternal punishment is separation from the Lord and the glory of His power.

Isn't this an interesting description?

Hell, is often understood in terms of the horror of suffering and that is not denied.

But the greatest horror is to **be totally separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power.**

Even the most reprobate unbeliever enjoys something in life that he will not possess in this state of judgment.

So many think of hell as a reunion of rebels, kind of like going to a seedy bar to hang out and continue the fun. Only a fool thinks of judgment this way, only someone who is total denial.

As we read this description, we should be moved to say, Lord, thank you for delivering me from what I deserve!

There is absolutely no place here for anything but utter humility and thankfulness to God!

And how we should be motivated to even more share this glorious news with others!

One of John Piper's sons, Abraham, very sadly has turned completely away from God's truth and has become a mocker.

He has gained great popularity making short videos that mock and attack God's truth.

In one video he accuses and teases Christians saying we don't really believe in hell, because if we did we would not go out for a meal after church knowing that some are going to hell.

How can you go out to eat or enjoy a nice meal when there are people who are going to hell?

He is sadly deluded, but I think at one level he does strike a nerve.

**Do we take seriously the reality of God's judgment enough to warn others?**

Now, we know that it is not emotional manipulation that encourages gospel witness.

We also confess that God is fully sovereign. In the end, it is not our persuasiveness or intellectual prowess.

But we are called to be witnesses to God's truth, glory, and gospel.

May a serious consideration of God's wrath and judgment encourage us in bringing a faithful witness to God's truth.

Verse 10 in Greek ends with the words in **that Day!**

There is a coming day of both great judgment and also the most incredible expression of worship that God's people have ever known.

Our Lord is coming to both bring true vengeance and to receive glory and worship from His people.

The word **glorified** in verse 10 is used just two times in the NT, both in this chapter.

See also verse 12.

There is a future glorifying. There is a present glorifying, which is a beautiful connection.

And isn't it so amazing to consider on this most awesome day that our Lord comes to receive glory from His saints?

Now, we must confess that this glory is not something that originates ultimately in who we are or what we can give.

The glory that our Lord receives is that glory which is first worked in our lives by His power and grace.

**Rom. 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

**1John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

The word admired is a word that is sometimes translated as marveled. It is used often in the gospels.

Total wonder connected with praise is the idea here.

Notice in this verse the twofold reference to believe.

The glory and wonder come from those who believe.

The Thessalonian church is part of this group because they believed the witness that was brought by Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

Those who have no concept of the gospel mock this truth saying if you just believe some silly idea than you are magically saved and if you reject it you go to hell. How unfair and ridiculous.

But those who have been humbled before the only true God know that this belief is not some empty idea that we say yes to.

We believe because our blinded eyes have been opened to the truth.

We believe because like blind men given sight we can now see the sun shining in its brilliance in the day.

**Rom. 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

## CONCLUSION

**We pray that the Lord will use us and that by His grace we will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God even if that means suffering for it!**

You must trust in the total certainty and perfection of God's justice.

**Prayer**

## Hymn 240

### **BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 13:20-21**

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.