

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 Jesus' Return

1

Introduction

In 2022:

- 2,110 church buildings were attacked, looted or forcibly closed. Half of these were in China.
 - 5898 Christians were killed for their faith. Most of these were in Nigeria.
 - 360 Million Christians are living under persecution.
- 6,175 Christians arrested without trial and imprisoned.
 - 3829 Christians were kidnapped and missing.

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1 NORTH KOREA	11 INDIA	21 UZBEKISTAN	31 LAOS	41 TURKEY
2 SOMALIA	12 SYRIA	22 COLOMBIA	32 MOZAMBIQUE	42 COMOROS
3 YEMEN	13 SAUDI ARABIA	23 BURKINA FASO	33 INDONESIA	43 MALAYSIA
4 ERITREA	14 MYANMAR	24 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	34 QATAR	44 TAJIKISTAN
5 LIBYA	15 MALDIVES	25 VIETNAM	35 EGYPT	45 CAMEROON
6 NIGERIA	16 CHINA	26 TURKMENISTAN	36 TUNISIA	46 BRUNEI
7 PAKISTAN	17 MALI	27 CUBA	37 CONGO DR (DRC)	47 OMAN
8 IRAN	18 IRAQ	28 NIGER	38 MEXICO	48 KAZAKHSTAN
9 AFGHANISTAN	19 ALGERIA	29 MOROCCO	39 ETHIOPIA	49 JORDAN
10 SUDAN	20 MAURITANIA	30 BANGLADESH	40 BHUTAN	50 NICARAGUA

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Introduction

Revelation 6:10

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

The church in Thessalonica was also undergoing tremendous persecution. Their faith in God was strong, and their love for each other was growing. However, they too must have wondered how long.

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2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

5

Retribution

2 Thessalonians 1:6, 8-9

Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

The term “vengeance” means “to give full punishment.” It is translated “justice,” “punishment,” “retribution,” “vengeance,” and “avenging of wrong.” In his defense before the Sanhedrin, Stephen said speaking of Moses, “And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian” (Acts 7:24).

God’s retribution is not like the unruly, hostile, selfish, sinful passion that causes people to retaliate against others. God is righteous but He is also just, and evil must be punished. Since man does not know all the facts and struggles with his own selfishness, God reserves vengeance for Himself.

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Retribution - Why

2 Thessalonians 1:6a

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay

Every culture, no matter what its laws, ethics, or morals, punishes criminals. People have a sense of justice, including capital punishment, because they are made in God's image.

What is imperfectly true in the human realm is perfectly true in God's realm. When Paul wrote that "it is a righteous thing", he is saying that it is proper for God to repay with retribution those who violate His law just as it is right for God to reward believers with the kingdom (v. 5).

7

Retribution - Why

2 Thessalonians 1:6a

Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay

The term translated "repay" means "to give back". It is a strong word that carries the idea of a full and complete repayment. The God who said, "Vengeance is Mine" (Deut. 32:35), will justly repay sinners for violating His law.

All sinners deserve the divine judgment of death and hell. Jesus warned His hearers that they needed to repent. It is easy to point to others, but we are each responsible for ourselves.

The threat of God's vengeance, retribution, and judgment is not only just but also a deterrent, a roadblock on the way to hell. Those who ignore that roadblock are without excuse (Rom. 1:18–20).

8

Retribution - Who

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 8c

those who trouble you, ... those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who trouble believers is a broad category, including all who attack the people of God. In Genesis 12:3 God promised Abraham, “The one who curses you I will curse,” while Zechariah 2:8 warns that “he who touches [God’s people], touches the apple of His eye.” Those who trouble God’s people in effect poke a finger in His eye. God watches over His children whether they be Israel or New Testament believers. In Matthew 25:40-45 Jesus talks about the judgment of the sheep and goats when He returns. Listen to verse 45, “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’”

9

Retribution - Who

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 8c

those who trouble you, ... those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul describes those who will face God’s retribution by using two phrases. First, he describes them as **those who do not know God** which means they do not have a relationship with Him. They may know the facts about Him, and even imagine that they are serving Him by persecuting His people (cf. John 16:2), but they are separate from Christ having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). The reason they do not know God is not ignorance but wickedness that causes them to suppress the truth that they do know (Rom. 1:18–21).

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Retribution - Who

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 8c

those who trouble you, ... those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul further defines those who will face God's retribution as those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This description intensifies their guilt. It is "damning" to reject an innate knowledge of God, but it is to incur severer judgment to openly reject the gospel. The hottest hell, the severest punishment, is reserved for those who do not obey the gospel. Jesus taught that there are varying degrees of punishment based upon a person's understanding of the will of God.

Luke 12:47-48

And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

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Retribution - Who

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 8c

those who trouble you, ... those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where salvation is a gift to be received, the **gospel** is a command to be obeyed.

Acts 17:30

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Those who remain disobedient to the command to believe the gospel will face God's retribution.

12

Retribution - How

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 9

God to repay with tribulation ... ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

Fittingly, God will repay the disobedient unbelievers who afflict His people with tribulation which means “trouble,” “distress,” “difficult circumstances,” or “suffering.” Paul specifically defined it in this passage as the punishment of everlasting destruction.

Everlasting refers to things of endless duration. Destruction does not refer to annihilation, but to ruination. It does not mean the cessation of existence but rather the loss of all that makes existence worthwhile.

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Retribution - How

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 9

God to repay with tribulation ... ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power

Two conditions under which the lost will serve their eternal sentence reinforce the nature of their punishment. First, they will be forever away from the presence of the Lord. There is a great chasm fixed between heaven and hell. Since “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17), there will be no goodness, pleasure, love, or joy in hell.

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Retribution - How

2 Thessalonians 1:6b, 9

God to repay with tribulation ... ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

The lost will also serve their eternal sentence away from the glory of His power. Jesus described hell as a place of darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; cf. 2 Peter 2:4, 17; Jude 13), cut off from the visible display of God's splendor and majesty. There will be no relief from hell's horrors; nothing of God's glorious presence to bring any shred of beauty, pleasure, joy, or peace. It will be a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), where "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night" (Rev. 14:11). Yet no words can adequately express the misery of this reality.

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Rest

2 Thessalonians 1:6a, 7a, 10

Since *it is* a righteous thing with God ... ⁷ to *give* you who are troubled rest with us ... ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Not only will Christ return to bring retribution to unbelievers but also to give rest to believers. The word translated "rest" expresses the idea of relaxation, loosening, easing, freedom, refreshment, restoration, and rest. The Bible promises three kinds of rest to believers. First, there is the rest that salvation brings (Matthew 11:28–29 Hebrews 4:9–11), second is the millennial rest. When Jesus returns at the end of the seven-year Tribulation will establish His earthly kingdom, in which His subjects will enjoy rest and peace (Acts 3:19–21). The final rest promised in Scripture is the eternal rest the redeemed enter into at death. In the presence of God believers will find rest forever—from sin, temptation, trials, sorrows, and any other form of suffering. For these believers the persecution they are experience will end when He returns.

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Rest - Why

2 Thessalonians 1:6a, 7a

Since *it is* a righteous thing with God ... ⁷ to *give rest*

Just as God's justice demands that He bring retribution on unbelievers, so also it is only just for Him **to give rest** to the redeemed. "If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, suffering the just judgment of God in our place (cf. Isa. 53:4–6, 12; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

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Rest – Who

2 Thessalonians 1:7a

to *give you who are troubled* rest with us

God promises eternal rest to all believers, for all believers can expect to be **troubled**. To Timothy Paul wrote, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. Acts 14:22). Suffering for Christ is a mark of a true Christian; those whose faith is not genuine will not survive persecution (Matt. 13:20–21). Eternal rest comes to those who counted the cost of following Christ, and willingly took up their crosses to follow Him (Luke 9:23).

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Rest – How

2 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

When He comes, two things will happen that will bring relief to believers. First, Christ will **be glorified in His saints**. There is coming a day in which God will be glorified through believers in a manner never before seen. Believers are called in this life to make manifest the glory of the indwelling Christ by doing “all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. Phil. 1:11). In this life, believers can only do so imperfectly, but when Christ returns, He “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21; cf. 1 John 3:2). We will then be pure vessels through which the glory of God shines.

Second, Jesus will **be admired among all those who believe**. Believers of all ages will marvel at the glory of Christ that is fully revealed in the resurrected saints.

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So What ...

2 Thessalonians 1:10

¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

So that the Thessalonians would not fear that they might miss out on the relief Christ will bring when He returns, Paul reminded them that they would be among the glorified saints because **our testimony to you was believed**. Since they **believed** Paul, Silas, and Timothy’s preaching of the gospel they will never face retribution but will experience the blessed relief of glory that awaits the redeemed.

The same goes for us today. Are you ready?

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