

**November 7, 2010**  
**Last Judgment**

*“Waiting for God’s Justice”*

**2 THESSALONIANS 1:5-10**

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*All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. <sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

When someone treats you unfairly, there is a certain amount of satisfaction that comes when justice is served. Take for example that time when you were driving down the freeway. Traffic was heavy but still flowing along. Suddenly a large black pickup truck pulls up behind you right on your tail, almost touching your bumper. When a small crease opens up in the flow of traffic he shoots across the lane and zooms up to the next car in front of him. But then it happens. Ten miles down the road you see the big black truck pulled over by a CHP officer. A big smile comes across your face. Justice was served.

The Christians of Thessalonica were not being hounded by a black truck, but they were being hounded and harassed by their heathen neighbors just because they were Christians. Imagine the children wondering when daddy was coming home because he had been thrown into jail for his Christian faith. Jobs were lost. People were being put to death for their faith. The cry went up, “Where is God?” “Why is he not taking care of us and hearing our prayers?” “Where is justice?”

Our focus in our worship today is on the last judgment. When Jesus comes in clouds of glory, justice will be served. He will take those who believe in him to the place he has prepared for us. He will send those who reject him into everlasting punishment. Here we are at this moment of time and in this place, waiting patiently for the Lord to return and carry out his justice. This patient waiting for Jesus’ return for justice puts a whole different spin on our lives. It makes us different from the people around us.

**Waiting patiently for retribution**

The Lord our God allows us to live our lives here on this earth so we can tell people about his system of justice. Paul writes about this justice of God. “All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.” The Lord uses our lives as evidence left behind in this world that Jesus could return at anytime in clouds of glory. He allows us to pass on the word that his judgment is coming soon and no can escape it.

Let's take a closer look at these Christians living in Thessalonica. Paul said of them in an earlier verse, "Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring." The fact that these people were willing to die for their faith was evidence that the message of Jesus Christ, his resurrection and his coming again in glory was something worth hearing and accepting. When Peter and John were flogged by the Jewish Sanhedrin, it says in Acts 5, "The Apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name (of Jesus)." When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote to the dear Christians that the entire Roman Guard was privilege to hear the message of the gospel because of his imprisonment. When we are put down for our faith, or even when we face trials and troubles in this life, we are given opportunity to leave people the evidence that someday Jesus is coming in glory, and they need to put their trust in him to be saved before it is too late.

The time is coming when the Lord our God will bring justice to this earth. It says, "He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." We will physically see Jesus coming again on clouds of glory. He is not coming secretly to snatch up his church and build a kingdom on this earth as some claim. The words of Scripture are so clear. He is coming in blazing fire. He will judge all people. He will punish those who have rejected him and repay with trouble those who have troubled us.

The sin that exists inside of me and you always wants to seek revenge and even gloat over someone who finally gets what they deserve, especially those who made life miserable for us. Ah the satisfaction that comes at the class reunion. You come face to face with someone who bullied you and put you down, and now that person is a washout and you are a success. God will set the record straight on judgment day. Those who torment and taunted and torture the Christians and even put them to death will receive their punishment from God. Do we gloat and rejoice when we think of this judgment coming? No, we have the mind of Jesus who prayed as he was being ridiculed and nailed to the cross. "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

How awful it will be for those who do not have Jesus as their Savior when judgment day comes. We think of those we know and love who are not with Jesus and who are not covered with his righteousness. Tears come to our eyes as we hear these words of God's judgment. "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." There is so much evidence in the Bible about this place we call hell, this place of everlasting punishment. Jesus said the people who do not believe in him will someday hear him speak these words, "Depart from me, you are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for devil and his angels." The Jehovah Witnesses are so bothered by this that they have their own Bible called the New World Translation They purposely mistranslate the words about everlasting punishment to everlasting cutting off. How easy it is for us to live our lives as if this place did not exist and were not real. This is no nightmare that will go away when we wake up in the morning. "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and out from the presence of the Lord."

When we become convinced of the truth of these words about God's justice and God's

punishment of sin, then we want to run to the only place where we can find safety, and forgiveness and protection from this day of God's wrath. We want to find protection in Jesus and his cross and his blood and his resurrection from the dead. We want to find this safety for ourselves and we want this safety and protection for others.

### **Waiting patiently for relief**

Imagine for a moment that Jesus would come back on clouds of glory on this Sunday afternoon. What a huge sigh of relief that would bring to us. It says, "He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled as well." When you are undergoing great suffering and pain, you long for relief to come. Remember the commercial for Bayer aspirin that asked, "How do you spell relief?" and then answered with one word, "Bayer." How do we spell relief? It is JESUS. Jesus said "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." It was Jesus who spoke about a giving us the peace that this world cannot give. He is the shepherd who carries us in his loving arms. He is the one who holds us in his arms when our day of death comes or when judgment day comes. It was Jesus who told us to lift up our heads when he returns because our redemption is near. The Bible ends with these words from Jesus, "Yes, I am coming soon." The church responds with the words. "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." We long for the rest that Jesus will bring when he returns in glory.

On the day that Jesus returns we will join our fellow Christian and lift up our voices and shout for joy when we see Jesus face to face. It says in verse 10, "On that day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." It appears these dear Christians in Thessalonica had some confusion about what would happen when Jesus returned. There was the concern that they would not see Jesus visibly come in clouds of glory and share in that exciting event. In the previous letter Paul told them that even their loved ones who died in Jesus would be raised to life and see Jesus come in glory.

He writes to them, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." We are happy that our parents and our loved ones and husbands and wives and children who died in Jesus will not miss out on that great day when Jesus returns. They will be raised to life and see him come on clouds of glory. They will hear the sound of the trumpet. They will join us in this shout of joy that comes from God's people and the excitement that we will share.

Oh how Jesus will be glorified in the praises of his people when that day comes. The songs of praise we sing in our worship and all the prayers we pray together in Jesus' name are a foretaste of the future glory that we will someday offer to Jesus when he returns. The Revelations says of the people who are with Jesus when he returns, "And they cried with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

When Jesus was dying on the cross, a thief turned to him and said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus looked at him and said, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise." This is what Jesus wants for all people. God's day of justice is coming. Now is the time to turn to Jesus as this thief did. Now is the time to treasure every moment of life the Lord gives us as an opportunity to help people find Jesus their Savior as the dying thief once did. "Amen, even so Lord

Jesus, come quickly." Amen.