

2 Thess 1:3-2:14
When Christ Returns

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other,
4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,
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;
6 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.
11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,
12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[As before, this will be a two part sermon the first part will focus on the material in Thessalonians chapter 1 and what is to happen when Christ Returns while the second sermon will focus on the second chapter and the events that will precede the return of Christ.]

You can't have read the New Testament without noticing the importance of the RETURN of Christ. Most of the books of the New Testament contain a reference to it. Even books in the Old Testament spoke of the coming Day of the Lord when the Messiah would judge the world. If you truly believe in the birth death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you must also believe that He will come again at the end of the Age just as He promised.

It is a truth so certain, that the Apostles, could refer to it again and again in their letters to the church as a reason for not giving up hope, and continuing on patiently in the middle of tribulation.

Here Paul is writing to the churches in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica. The church there had been born in a storm, and was still bearing up under attacks. The Christians there were suffering persecution and tribulation because of their faith. They would find hard to trade in the market. Their patriotism was undoubtedly questioned, and no doubt many thought of them as traitors both to the city, because they no longer worshipped the gods who supposedly protected the city or took part in the festivals at the temples and held the same beliefs as their neighbors, but also to the empire as they would have refused to worship Caesar and take the customary oath of allegiance that "Caesar is Lord."

Paul actually says something interesting, instead of saying that as modern person would that suffering is all wrong and I'm praying your suffering and tribulation will end, that their suffering is actually a result of their patience and faith, and an evidence of God's judgment that they have been found righteous. That's the amazing thing persecuted is considered the normal state for Christians. Jesus

wasn't lying when he promised His followers, "In the world you will have tribulation" and that the world would hate them because they were not of the world. You see suffering for the faith in the bible is often seen as something that brings good fruit, perseverance, character, hope, and even love. It's having the world love you that's seen as a dangerous sign. Their Persecution is even an anticipation of their vindication on the day of judgment, when all Christians will forever pass from fellowship in suffering to fellowship in glory.

But it wasn't just to the Thessalonian Christians that Paul was writing, through Him God was speaking Christians in every place and time. Christians today throughout the world have the same problems as these Thessalonians, and even here in America "**all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**" (2 Tim. 3:12)

But all of that will change at the return of Christ. Now when he speaks of the coming of Jesus here and in the next chapter, Paul uses two different terms to describe it:

Apocalypseis – Unveiling or Revealing – the Greek word we get the English *apocalypse* and
Paraousia – coming – a word used for the visit of a king

The Day of Christ's return will be both, an Apocalypsis and a Paraousia, but I want to suggest that for the believer it will be mostly Parousia and for the unbeliever it will be most apocalypsis:

For the believer it will be the day he has been looking for, the Parousia, the day of the coming of His King! For believers who have suffered who are troubled day and night, as your brethren in so many countries are, it will be a day when you are given the gift of *rest*. Not a temporary respite, like we sometimes enjoy in this world. That is kind of like the rest a boxer has when the bell rings and he can retire to his corner to recuperate for a moment or two before having to get back in the ring. This is rest that Christ brings is the rest that comes after the fight is over and the victory is finally secured.

Heb. 4:9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

The word there in Hebrews 4 is Sabbatismos – a Rest - Jesus comes to give his people that final unending rest from their labors and tribulations and struggles. That is the real Sabbath Resting that we just practice for with our Lord's Day Sabbaths.

Our great enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil are constantly trying to rob believers of that rest – God had given a day of rest to his people in the Garden as gift, he took one day in seven and hallowed it, set it apart as a day of ceasing from labor, and so our great enemies have labored as hard to eliminate that as they have to eliminate the other great creation blessing of marriage. So in Egypt, during their time in slavery, the labor of God's people was unending, and so when God had freed them from their bondage one of the first things he did, as soon as they were safe across the Red Sea, was to restore to them the Sabbath day.

Today the world is once again laboring to wipe out that day of rest. Sunday comes and the Devil says this day is just like every other day, the world says GO WORK, the Flesh says GO PLAY. Why? Because all three do not want you to rest, lest you obey the command of ***Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!***

But when Jesus comes he will give us a Sabbath Rest that has no end!

For the unbeliever it will be an Apocalypsis a terrifying revelation of the power of Christ, something that he denied.

We have an insight given to us in how terrifying that day will be to them in *Revelation 6:15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

Kings and Mighty men might deny him now, but in that day, when the curtain is forever lifted, the veil drawn aside so that his power and glory is no longer concealed no one ever will. On that day every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. It will be for them a day of final disaster and the beginning of their everlasting punishment.

For the believer, though it will not be a day of fear but a happy morning. The Son will rise with healing in His wings and what brings terror to the heart of the unbeliever will bring joy to the heart of the believer. The transformation of the saints on that day will perfectly mirror his own glory and he will be the object of their admiration. The same day that seals the doom of the ungodly is the day that secures the final salvation of all believers.

Please note this Judgment and Deliverance is **one day**, there is no interval in scripture between the deliverance of believers and the judgment of unbelievers as Dispensationalism teaches.

It will also not be secret so that we might not see it, He comes with his Angels. They aren't just for show incidentally [Grateful to Cornelis Venema – Wedding Analogy]

Looking forward to that day of the revealing of Jesus Christ, Paul prays that God would be glorified in them and they in Him. God's grace being it's source, in other words that they would be working out their salvation looking toward that day, doing the good works that God has appointed for them.

Now I know what everyone wants to know is when will these things happen? Well that's for next week D.V. unless of course Christ returns before hand, or you or I go to meet him, in which case you'll know for certain before the next sermon!

But for now let's get down to some Applications for these verses:

What significance should the fact that Jesus is coming back have for believers?: It should affect everything we do!:

Example of the spouse whose husband is deployed, they are waiting, counting the days, their expectation is high, and everything is done looking forward to that day when their loved one will return. That is the way it should be for the Christian.

Huge portions of the church today though act as though they long ago received a telegram reporting that their husband was missing and believed dead. So after a while they moved on. They don't expect him to come back, and so they got remarried to the world. And so the household begins to be more and more adapted to the way their new spouse wants it, rather than the way Christ commanded it should be. He has become for so many merely a fond but increasingly fuzzy memory. Imagine the shock that many professing Christians will experience when the Christ who is spoken of in these passages returns!

For you Christian this should be the most real and the most important fact in your life. I was listening to the testimony of Christian quarterback as I was

What significance should the fact that Jesus is coming back have for unbelievers? That too should affect what they do!

Their ruin shall be as everlasting as the bliss of the redeemed. James Denney put it this way, and please hear and reflect these words, because what they speak of is the most important truth that will ever be set before you! Denney says:

“The Gospel is God’s last word to men and the consequences for those who do not obey it are final... Obey, and you enter into a light in which there is no darkness at all: disobey, and you pass eventually into a darkness in which there is no light at all. What God says to us in all Scripture, from beginning to end, is not, Sooner or later? but, Life or death ? ...The difference between those who obey, and those who do not obey, the gospel, is not the difference of a little better and a little worse ; it is the difference of life and death. If there is any truth in Scripture at all, this is true—that those who stubbornly refuse to submit to the gospel, and to love and obey Jesus Christ, incur at the Last Advent an infinite and irreparable loss. They pass into a night on which no morning dawns.”

“those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel”

Two Categories –

- 1) Those who do not know the true God and who labor in the darkness of false religion or no religion
- 2) Those who know of the true God, but who do not obey the Gospel, who have perhaps heard it time and again as you have.

If you are in either of those categories, know that you are rushing towards that day of judgment when you will be numbered amongst those who call upon mountains to fall on you to hide you from the wrath of the lamb.

Now when I plead with you not to be amongst them, it is not just because I am commanded to do so, I do so out of a genuine concern for your soul. What kind of monster would I be to genuinely believe in Hell and not be moved at the thought that you might be there. [Example the Pigs on their way to Smithfield] You are not like them, death for you is not the end!

2 Cor. 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

NKJ 2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.