

**Justice Will Prevail**  
**2 Thessalonians 1:5-10**  
**Part One**

I recently became involved in a conversation with a man about capital punishment. He was against capital punishment because he believed that it had not proven itself to be an effective deterrent. I often hear this argument from those opposing capital punishment. I am very perplexed why capital punishment as a deterrent is even an issue. In my mind the issue is not whether or not it is a deterrent, but rather whether or not it is just.

Various people may have different opinions about what is just and what is not just. But from a biblical standpoint, from God's standpoint, there is no question that capital punishment is what needs to be practiced. In **Genesis 9:6** the Lord made this very clear to Noah when he said, "**Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man.**" In our society today, according to the biblical standard of justice, there has been very little justice.

In 1994 there were over 22,000 murders in the US. Do you know how many executions there were in the U.S. in 1994? There were 31. Where is justice? God has promised the righteous that they will be blessed. And God has promised the wicked that they will be cursed. But where is justice?

Isn't it common to see the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? How can this be? You yourself may have struggled to understand this. Certainly some of the prophets struggled with this issue at times. In **Psalms 73** we read, "**(2) But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling; my steps had almost slipped (3) for I was envious of the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**" The Psalmist in essence was struggling with the issue of justice.

When we are suffering it is sometimes easy for us to question God and His justice. Certainly this could very easily be the case with the Thessalonians. They were suffering for their faith. Certainly we saw this back in **verse 4**, "**therefore we speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.**" It would have been very easy for them to question God. It could have been very easy for them to say, "Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do bad things happen to people who are seeking to please you and to live righteous lives?" It would have been very easy for them to question the justice of God. In light of this, Paul goes on to say in **V. 5**, "**This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment.**" Their perseverance in the midst of their persecutions and afflictions was evidence to themselves that a new life had been imparted to them. As assuredly as they knew that a new life had been imparted to them in Christ, they could be assured of God's future righteous judgment.

Let us go on to read the rest of the passage that we will be considering over the next couple of weeks. Let us read about this "**righteous judgment.**" Let us again go back to **V. 5** and let us read through **V. 10**, "**This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (6) For**

**after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed - for our testimony to you was believed.”** This future righteous judgment involves an unveiling.

## THE UNVEILING

Let us look at V. 7, **“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.”** The word translated **“revealed”** is the word **“APOKALUPSEI”** from which we get the English word **“apocalypse.”** This is an interesting choice of words. The word **“revealing”** (APOKALUPSEI) means **“an uncovering”** or **“unveiling.”** It is used primarily when something hidden is made manifest. In this context the unveiling or the uncovering is specifically referring to the Second Advent. Or in other words when Christ returns to set up His kingdom.

The rapture, when the church is caught up to be with Christ, which could happen at any time, is not in view here. Rather it is the Second Advent of Christ. This event will take place seven years after the rapture. If you think that the **“uncovering”** or **“unveiling”** of Jesus at the rapture will be a somewhat shocking experience, consider how the world might respond to Christ’s **“uncovering”** or **“unveiling”** at the Second Advent.

It is true that at the present time we, the church, may not see Jesus, but it does not mean that we do not know Him. We know Him as our Savior. We know Him as our Lord. We know Him as our King. We know Him as the Holy One, the only begotten Son of God. But this is not true of the world. They not only do not see Him, they do not know Him. They do not know Him as their Savior. They do not know Him as their Lord. They do not know Him as their King. They do not know Him as the Holy One of God. But this will not always be true. There is a day coming when all of the things that we now know to be true of Jesus will be uncovered and revealed to the world. It will be a time when everything will be set right and there will be the meting out of perfect justice.

Paul is therefore telling these Thessalonians that their continuing perseverance under increasing persecution should reassure them that there is a time coming when everything will be set right and he refers to this time as the **‘APOKALUPSEI.’** Paul is speaking about a future supernatural invasion of Jesus. This invasion will take the world by surprise. And he will crush this world like a clay pot.

The first time that he came, the reality of who He was was hidden. In **John 1** it says the world **“knew him not.”** The second time He comes, He will not be hidden. He will be **“unveiled.”** Every eye will see and everyone will know exactly who He is.

If you had gone into the stable in Bethlehem and looked into the crib you would have seen a baby. There would have been nothing in that baby's form to reveal to you who that baby was. Were you to live in that village and know Joseph and Mary and had seen their young son Jesus, you would not have seen anything particularly outstanding. The same is true if you had seen Him on the dusty paths of Israel in His earthly ministry. You would not have seen anything on the surface that would have revealed to you His divine essence. If you had stood on the hillside called "Golgotha" and watched a man Jesus being nailed to a cross, there would have been nothing that you would have seen with your eye that would reveal to you that He was eternal God. This is because the first time he came, his true nature was hidden. The next time he comes there will be no stable, no dusty roads to walk, no sinners to attack Him, no demons to stalk his steps, no soldiers to press a crown of thorns into his brow or to nail spikes into his hands and feet and no spear run into his side. Next time will be different.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE UNVEILING

This unveiling of Jesus is described with three prepositional phrases. Look at **V. 7**, "**and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.**"

#### FROM HEAVEN

The first time He came, He came from heaven but He came through the miracle of birth. People did not see Him moving from heaven to earth. But not the next time. In **Acts 1** it tells us that when Christ was with His disciples a cloud received Him out of their sight. In **verse 11** two angels asked them, "**Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.**" And how was that? Visibly, physically, and in a cloud.

To help you see how dramatic this unveiling of Jesus from heaven will be, we need to consider the events just prior to his appearance. In **Matthew 24:29-30** we read these words, "**But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken.**" What are these verses telling us? They are telling us that at the end of the tribulation there will be a time of total darkness. And then what happens? **V. 30** says, "**And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.**" One moment the world will be going about their business as they always have, and then the lights will go out and when everyone is paralyzed with fear, into that fear will come the Son of Man from heaven. But there is more to this picture. Not only do we see that Christ at His coming will be revealed "**from heaven,**" we also see that it is "**with His mighty angels.**"

#### WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS

Though it is translated in this verse "**with His mighty angels**" it literally reads "**angels of His power.**" We learn from this that angels only have power as He gives it to them. Jesus is not

going to be alone when He reveals Himself to this world. How many angels do you picture? Do you picture 2 or 3? If this is what you are picturing, I believe that you have the wrong picture. Again going to **Matthew 25:31** it says, **“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory (which is of course what we are talking about) and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.”** How many angels will be with Jesus? **“All the angels.”** How many is that anyway?

In **Psalm 68:17** we read, **“The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness.”** Who are these so-called chariots of God? The verse does not specifically say. But it does say that they were with Him at Mount Sinai. And who do we know was with God on Mount Sinai? It would appear from the account in **Exodus 19** that these **“chariots of God”** are angels. Though angels are not mentioned specifically by name, we do see on Mount Sinai someone other than the Jewish people blowing trumpets in **verses 13, 16, and 19**. I would have to conclude that those blowing the trumpets were angels.

How many angels are there? A myriad of angels, and thousands of thousands. In other words, there are too many to be counted. At the end of the end of the tribulation, after the rapture of the church and before he established His earthly rule, Jesus will return and unveil Himself. At the unveiling the world will experience a period of total darkness and then Jesus will appear with all of the angels of His might. But there is more.

#### IN FLAMING FIRE

Let us again look at **v.7**, **“when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (or angels of His might) in flaming fire.”** The fire that will accompany Him at his unveiling (APOKALUPSEI) is the fire of His presence. Very much like what we would see at the “burning bush” in **Exodus 3:2**.

God is associated with fire in the Scriptures. Certainly within this passage we will see the fire of His presence become the fire of His judgment. But the point of fire accompanying His unveiling is to point out to us that He is God. He comes from heaven where God dwells. He comes with the angels of his might which are God’s ministers. And he comes with flaming fire which is the manifest essence of God’s own glory.

I just want to point out to you again that there are always people who will deny Christ’s deity. But there are many passages such as this which move from those things which are repeatedly stated to be true of God and God alone and are applied to Jesus. Paul moves easily from attributing to Jesus what has always been attributed to God. Thus Paul reminds us that when Jesus comes, He comes as God and is revealed as God. And when He comes He will execute justice.

#### THE RESULTS OF THE UNVEILING

This is not wishful thinking. This is what has been written. This event will produce two results. Let us read **VV. 6-10** and see if you can see the two results. **“For after all it is only just for**

**God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (8) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed - for our testimony to you was believed.”** What are the two results of His coming? Relief for those who have suffered for righteousness and retribution for those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully there is not a single person here this morning who is not suffering for your faith in some way. This suffering may take on the form of physical weariness or even exhaustion as you seek to minister your gifts and talents for the building up of the body of Christ. This suffering may take on the form of financial hardship as you generously and sacrificially share your resources with the church and those who are in need. You may even suffer persecution as you boldly and persistently share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But be assured of this that just as the enemies of the cross of Christ will suffer retribution, those who are seeking to serve the Lord and to follow Him even while they suffer will experience relief.