

"Upon this rock I will build my church"

**Matthew 16:18**

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THE GENERAL RESURRECTION  
AND JUDGMENT AT  
THE END OF TIME

2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-12

INTRODUCTION

A. The apostle Paul had written these Christians to give them comfort and hope after this life in the previous letter.

B. He now writes to give more detailed information about the coming of our Lord, the general resurrection of all the dead and the judgment that will occur at the end of time.

C. Here we learn that this will take place at the end of time, and there is no indication anywhere in this passage of a seven-year rapture period or a thousand-year earthly reign of our Lord from Jerusalem preceding the punishment of the unrighteous.

D. Punishment and reward will be meted out at the same instant at the end of time, and God is righteous in providing both rest and tribulation.

DISCUSSION

I. THE ENDURANCE OF THE SAINTS IS A TOKEN OF THE  
RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD (1:3-5).

A. The Thessalonian Christians were not easily shaken from their faith (1:3, 4).

1. Paul's prayer had been answered (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13).

a. It was fitting for Paul to give thanks for their perseverance.

b. Demonstrates the value and efficacy of prayer.

c. Our nation and the church are in dire need of prayer.

2. He continued to encourage them to stand (2:2).

3. They continued to be troubled (1:4,6; 1 Thessalonians 2:14).

4. Yet their faith continued to grow.

- a. Evidenced by their love for each other.
  - b. True faith in God results in love for others and a desire to help them.
5. Their faith became an example to other churches regarding endurance in the face of active persecution.
6. Even though surrounded by enemies, they refused to surrender.
- B. Faith and patience a “manifest token” of the righteous judgment of God (1:5).

1. A token is evidence or proof of something.
  2. Persecution was proof of their acceptance with God (2 Timothy 3:12; Matthew 5:10,11).
  3. More importantly, in this context it was evidence of the ultimate righteous judgment of God (Philippians 1:27,28).
- a. God will ultimately balance the scales of justice (Ecclesiastes 3:16,17).
  - b. Ungodly people see the faithfulness of persecuted saints and are reminded that God’s judgment will come, and that it will be righteous!
4. Trial by fire also makes Christians fit for the kingdom of God (1 Peter 1:6,7; 4:12,13).
5. It prepares us fully for the Lord’s return.

## II. THE LORD’S COMING AND JUDGMENT (1:6-9).

- A. God will provide tribulation to those who trouble His saints.
1. While they were unable to retaliate, God will be righteous in His judgment of their persecutors.
  2. There is no escaping God’s judgment (Hebrews 2:2-4).
  3. It will be based upon the actions of the individual (Revelation 20:12).
  4. The tribulation detailed.
    - a. Jesus comes to take vengeance upon the unbelieving and disobedient.
    - b. It involves flaming fire.
    - c. Fire that is described as unquenchable (Mark 9:43-49).

- d. Fire described as everlasting (Matthew 25:41).
- e. The earth will be burned up with fire (2 Peter 3:7,10 ).
- f. God is a consuming fire (Exodus 3:2; Daniel 7:9,10).
- g. Everlasting destruction does not mean the end of existence for those who will be punished.

“The word ‘destruction’ imports the wreck or dissolution of the organism, but not the annihilation of the essence. The rest of the sentence implies banishment and separation from the presence of the Lord with all its joys, and from all participation in that manifestation of his power which will show itself in the glorification of his redeemed.”<sup>1</sup>

- h. All avenues of hope and blessing from God are severed forever.

#### 5. Recipients of tribulation.

- a. “Them that know not God” (Exodus 5:2; Romans 1:28).
- b. Those who “obey not the gospel” (Luke 12:47,48; Romans 10:3, 6).
- c. A third category can be added to this: those who “sin willfully” after obeying the truth (Hebrews 10:26,27).

#### 6. Sin is not a laughing matter!!!

##### B. God will provide rest for the righteous.

1. Just as God is righteous in punishing those who afflict the saints, He is also righteous to give rest to the faithful.

2. That rest detailed.

- a. Rest from persecution.
- b. Rest from all afflictions (Hebrews 4:9; Revelation 14:13; 21:4).
- c. Rest with Paul, his co-workers, and all the saints of all time.

3. When rest is given, the Lord is glorified in His saints also.

- a. Christians will reflect His true glory (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:4).
- b. Rather than being terrified at His return, Christians will marvel at the majesty of the Savior.

4. The crucial question is, “When will this all happen?”

C. It all occurs at the same time when the Lord returns.

1. “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven” (1:7).

2. “In that day” (1:10).

3. Concerning this passage, Foy Wallace stated:

“Here, we have the two nouns ‘tribulation’ and ‘rest’ objects of one verb ‘recompense.’ God will recompense two things to two classes. He will recompense tribulation to the wicked; he will recompense rest to the righteous.”<sup>2</sup>

4. There is no room for any period of time between the punishment of the wicked and the reward for the righteous.

5. Other passages also link the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked at the same instant: at the end of time (Matthew 25:31-46).

6. As with all scripture, we must be careful in our interpretation of passages dealing with the end of time.

7. Brother Hugh Fulford states:

“There are passages such as I Thessalonians 4:13-17 and I Corinthians 15:51-57 that speak only of the state of the righteous following the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. These passages were addressed to Christians to give them hope, and to encourage them to live faithful lives, knowing what their eternal reward would be for such. The fact that the state of the wicked is not addressed in these particular passages does not mean that the unrighteous are not included in and affected by the single second coming of Christ and the one resurrection of all the dead! II Thessalonians 1:6-10 shows that when Christ comes both the righteous and the unrighteous will be dealt with—the righteous will be granted ‘rest’ (v. 7), while those that ‘know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’ will be ‘punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power’ (vv. 8, 9).”<sup>3</sup>

8. We must be ready for that instant in time when the Lord will return to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

## CONCLUSION

A. While we are here, we continually strive to be counted worthy of the name of Christ.

B. This only happens when we allow God to fulfill in us the works He has prepared for His saints.

C. When we do this, the Lord is glorified in us while we are yet on this earth, and we enjoy the continual blessings of the grace of God.

D. For those who refuse to obey the gospel, a great fear and foreboding should be their constant companion as they await that day when Christ shall come again.

#### ENDNOTES

1 McGarvey, J. W., and Philip Y. Pendleton, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans (Gospel Light Publishing Company, Delight, Arkansas), p. 32.

2 Wallace, Foy E., Jr., God's Prophetic Word (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Publications, Oklahoma City, 1946), p. 355,356.

3 Fulford, Hugh, "The Rapture and Tribulation," The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1999), p. 45.

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