

2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

PREFACE

In the news last week was a story that perfectly illustrates our passage in this session. As you may recall, some of the foaming-at-the-mouth complainers about the Trump presidency staged a “Day Without Immigrants” protest on February 16, intended to demonstrate how indispensable to our economy and the service industry illegal immigrants have become. So thousands, some without even the courtesy of informing their employers, dutifully skipped work that day to march in the streets and carry signs.

At last count at least one hundred (and surely more) learned that day how *dispensable* they really were. When they reported for work later that day or the next, they learned that they had been fired for skipping work.

- Twenty-five workers at *Ben’s Kosher Delicatessen Restaurant & Caterers* in Long Island, N.Y., were fired. There, police escorted the workers from the restaurant after they returned from the protests.
- Twelve Latino employees from the *I Don’t Care Bar and Grill* in Tulsa, Okla., were fired after they didn’t show up for their shift and failed to let their employers know about their absence. The employees [said] that they expected to be reprimanded, but not dismissed. Turns out the management at the *I Don’t Care Bar and Grill* did indeed care.
- About twenty employees were fired at *Bradley Coatings Inc.*, in Nolensville, Tenn., after participating in the protest. **The company’s attorney said the employees knew they were risking termination by participating in the protest.**
- In Colorado, 30 bricklayers were fired after they didn’t show up for work. Jim Serowski, the founder of *JVS Masonry* in Commerce City, Colorado, said: **“If you’re going to stand up for what you believe in, you have to be willing to pay the price.”**
- *Encore Boat Builders LLC*, based out of Lexington, S.C., had 21 workers who didn’t show up for work Thursday. **They were told not to participate in the demonstrations or face termination and when they failed to show up, the company followed through on its threat.** (Source: PJMedia.com)

As we will see, this is a made-to-order, contemporary illustration for our passage today.

v8

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10.

Sidebar: While it is true that this passage speaks of dark days for many, I must confess these two verse are great fun to study. The page in my workbook for these verses has arrows shooting all over the place. And the first word of v9 has the first arrow pointing somewhere else.

Question: To whom does “These” or “They” in v9 refer?

Answer: “those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” in v8.

Paul expands on this damning but rather sterile description of the unregenerate in his letter to the Philippians.

Read Philippians 3:18-19.

Our context here is God's balancing the scales of justice; specifically, he is meting out *His* "affliction" on those who afflicted His people. But the description of this retribution is not and will not be limited to those who have intentionally persecuted the followers of Christ. It will be handed down to everyone whose name is not written in the Book of Life.

And what we must remember is that, just like many of those workers who lost their job for failing to show up for work, *they were told*. Last week we made the point that "those who do not know God" are not passively ignorant, but willfully blind. They *know* what they are rejecting. Here is how the prophet Jeremiah describes the unbelievers in Israel:

Read Jeremiah 9:3, 5-6.

[Turn to Romans 1.](#)

Unbelief is not passive, but active. No one—*no one*—can claim ignorance of God, as Paul details in this letter.

Read Romans 1:18-21.

And while it is true that there *may* remain the odd tribe of jungle natives that has not heard of Jesus Christ, no one in civilized society can claim they do not know of Him. Everyone knows *of* Christ, so if they do not know *Him*, it is a willful rejection of Him. Consequently, when Christ returns in righteous judgment at the end of the Tribulation "with His mighty angels in flaming fire," there will, quite literally, be hell to pay.

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction,

pay the penalty^{NASB}, **be punished**^{KJV, NIV}, **suffer the punishment**^{ESV} = *dikēn tisousin*
= to pay a price by suffering a penalty handed down in righteous, self-evident judgment.

Just what does Paul mean by "eternal destruction"? An eternity of torture? An eternity of being killed, then revived, then killed again? If we look at the words, "eternal" means perpetual, everlasting; the word translated "destruction" is *olethron*, and a little more tricky. The *intensive* form of this word, *exolethreuo*, means to destroy utterly, annihilate. But the word in our text can also mean ruin, or to have something taken away from one—which ties into the definition Paul supplies himself.

away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Read Matthew 27:45-46.

Jesus suffered many things on the cross: the mental pain of seeing those He loved and was dying for, gleefully taunt and mock Him; the physical torture and agony of crucifixion, which killed slowly by asphyxiation; the agonizing weight of the world's sin. But I propose that the very worst of it for Him, the most agonizing torture of all, was when the Father turned His back on Him. Nothing man could do to Jesus could approach the pain of being, even for a moment, deserted by His Father.

And that is the verdict reserved in our text for those who have rejected God and His Christ; that is the penalty they must pay: estrangement from God the Father and the Son.

These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

We usually imagine that the worst of hell will be the physical and mental suffering from its conditions, but Jesus repeatedly emphasized that the worst aspect of perdition will be its alienation from God and His Christ.

Read Matthew 8:11-12.

(i.e., while the banquet will include—surprisingly to the Jews—many Gentiles, excluded—again, surprisingly to the Jews—will be many sons of Abraham; they will be “cast out” from the presence of the Lord.)

By contrast, Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians wrote,
Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.
(1 Thessalonians 4:17)

v10

Verse 10 continues the sentence begun in v9, with an interesting turn of phrase.

Read v10.

Jesus will return in judgment, to separate the wheat from the chaff, the goats from the sheep. He also comes “to be glorified in His saints.” Just what does Paul mean by this? As usual not everyone agrees, based mostly on their eschatological position; your position on the events of the end times will by necessity dictate where and when you place the events of v10. **(see [handout](#))**

Since v10 is a continuation of the sentence begun in v9 (in the KJV the sentence begins with v1), and since v9 speaks of God visiting His wrath on those who do not know Him, v10 falls into the same time frame (“when”). Those who subscribe to the *pretribulational premillennial* position must then place this at Christ's *second* return, since His first return (the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) will not include judgment.

This, then, influences our interpretation of Christ coming to be “glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.” Our point in time is seven years after the Rapture; on earth there has been a seven-year Tribulation, and now Christ returns with His angels to judge the world. He spoke of it Himself.

Read Matthew 25:31-33.

This moment takes place at the end of the Tribulation, and inaugurates the Millennium, when Christ will reign on earth for one thousand years. Thus, the “saints” referred to in v10 come from two groups:

1. those who had been part of the Rapture, seven years earlier, either raised from the grave or “raptured” while still living; they will return to the earth with Christ and His angels;
2. those who lost their lives for Christ during the Tribulation, and have just been resurrected to life, as well as those who were converted to faith in Christ during the Tribulation, but were not martyred.

to be glorified in His saints

Along with His judgment, our text specifies two more things that will take place upon His return. We can safely read two meanings into this phrase, which Lange describes well.

Lange: To be glorified in His saints does not mean simply to be praised by or among them in words, but to be actually shown to be glorious in the glory that He effects in them, by letting His glory appear in the glorification of His saints, by dwelling in them, and imparting Himself to them.

and to be marveled at among all who have believed

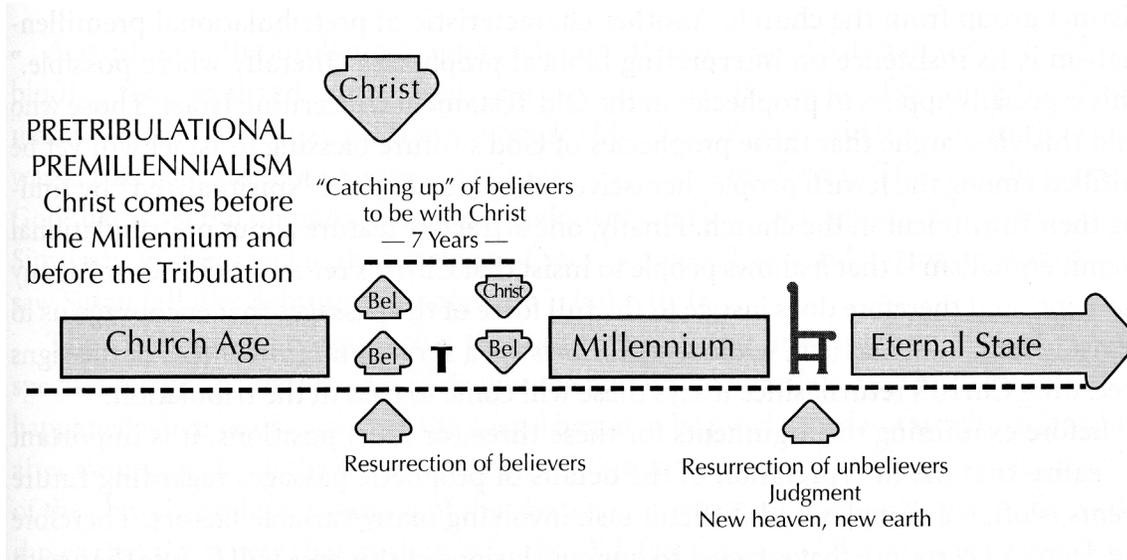
The second thing that will occur when Christ returns is that He will “be marveled at” by all the saints. And speaking of “marvel,” listen to how Charles Haddon Spurgeon marvelously describes this.

Spurgeon: Those who look upon the saints will feel a sudden wonderment of sacred delight; they will be startled with the surprising glory of the Lord’s work in them; ‘We thought He would do great things, but this! This surpasseth conception!’ Every saint will be a wonder to himself. ‘I thought my bliss would be great, but not like this!’ All his brethren will be a wonder to the perfected believer. He will say, ‘I thought the saints would be perfect, but I never imagined such a transfiguration of excessive glory would be put upon each of them. I could not have imagined my Lord to be so good and gracious.’

—for our testimony to you was believed.

Paul closes this verse with a heartfelt word of encouragement, in so many words saying, “And you, too, will be there to marvel at the Lord, Thessalonians, because you believed the good news we delivered to you.”

PRETRIBUTATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM



(from *Systematic Theology*, by Wayne Grudem)

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