

February 28, 2010

The Coming Judgment

2 Thessalonians 1

Do you really think there is a coming judgment? Is that something to be feared or eagerly anticipated? Or perhaps both? How does a person prepare for such a day? What are the qualities necessary in order to 'be ready'? Are there times when it is not a priority to 'be ready'?

What has life taught you about justice?

- Life's not fair—deal with it
- Leave vengeance to God
- You reap what you sow
- Justice is only for the rich, the poor get run over
- Nobody gets what they deserve

What kinds of persecutions were Paul's readers facing? How can a church thrive in this kind of environment? If a church can grow and mature in a hostile environment like that, why is it difficult to thrive in a mostly favorable environment?

1. vs. 1-3. Paul begins with a beautiful greeting. And then he adds some praise to that. What was he praising God about in the Thessalonians? Is *your* faith really growing? How do we know if that is happening? Can it grow in different ways or at different rates among Christians? Is it possible for you to love your church in increasing ways?
2. vs. 4. What were the Thessalonians doing that caused Paul to boast? Why would he tell other churches about these things? When you boast, are you more likely to speak about yourself or others? Why?
3. vs. 5-7. What word does Paul use to describe God? Do you really think God will deliver justice to this world? Or will it come when Jesus returns? What is the picture Paul paints of the return of Jesus? On that day, will you be seeking justice or mercy from God? What if God gives mercy to someone you think should not receive it? **Matt 6:15.**
4. vs. 8. What does it mean: *those who do not know God*? Isn't that unfair, they haven't had a chance to learn about Jesus? What does it take to *obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*? How could a loving God punish anyone? (vs. 6). **Heb 10:30-31.**
5. vs. 9-10. What would it be like to be separated from the presence of God for all eternity? What kinds of things will our destruction add to our separation? **Matt 3:12. Rev 20:15. Rev 21:8.** There is not only a punishment, but also a glorious reward!
6. vs. 11-12. What does it take for you to be *worthy of his calling*? Is it our good deeds? Is it hard to accept that God considers you worthy of His calling? Do you feel worthy? Do you think after all you've been through, God owes you heaven?

7. Rom 8:1. Do you feel condemned by someone? By God? How does this particular verse speak to your heart?

Does the idea of the judgment of God frighten you or reassure you? Why?

Are there persecutions or afflictions you are facing now? What helps you to endure them?

Have you had a time when you felt far away from God's presence? What happened that caused you to feel that way? What happened to help you move closer again?

Has there ever been an occasion when hardship led to growth and strengthening of your faith? Does someone have a testimony about that?

What part of the coming of Jesus is the most appealing to you?

- Seeing evil punished
- God's awesome power and glory
- Experiencing God and his power firsthand
- Seeing angels
- The full and personal fellowship with Jesus present with me
- Being with loved ones who have gone on before us
- Other? _____

What part of the coming of Jesus is the most discomfoting to you?

- The whole concept of being judged
- God's awesome power and glory
- Having my whole life revealed and evaluated
- The idea that I may *not* be found worthy of His kingdom
- I might long for someone who is not in heaven with me
- The fact that it hasn't happened yet
- Nothing about it rattles me
- Other? _____

Given the fact of Jesus' return and the coming judgment, what kind of people ought we to be?

What do you do when you look back at the end of any particular day, and you think you have not been that kind of person?

What should be our prayer each morning? What should be our prayer each evening?

Will your week be different from last week because you anticipate Jesus' return and judgment? Why or why not?

