

The Vengeance of the Lord Jesus, Part 1

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

Code: 53-2

Let's open our Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. Jesus Christ is coming back. That climactic reality is the theme of the text before us. The Thessalonians were enduring persecution as Christians. They were under pressure. And they had been faithful and persevering and steadfast. The persecution was intensifying. In order to encourage them to continuing endurance, Paul reminds them of the coming of Jesus Christ, their great hope. Notice verse 6. "For after all, it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and to give relief to those who are afflicted and to us as well, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power 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."

The key statement in this text is in verse 7, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed." The Lord Jesus shall be revealed. Verse 10 says it in a briefer way, "When He comes." The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is then the theme here. Ever and always the Christian reads the Scripture and it points to the climax of history being the return of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus, as He is called there in verse 7, is now at the right hand of God. He has been exalted as the sovereign Lord of the church. He is the faithful High Priest unto God for His people. But the day is coming when He shall be revealed.

Currently He is hidden. He is so much hidden now that the majority of the world probably believes that He is not even alive. But He shall be revealed. Presently we love Him though we have not seen Him. Some day we will see Him and love Him fully.

Now when Paul speaks about the Lord Jesus, he speaks about His revelation and His coming. In verse 10 he speaks about the fact that He is coming. The coming of Jesus Christ, or as Paul likes to use the Greek word, the parousia primarily is related to believers. The common term that Paul uses in discussing the return of Christ is parousia and it means the coming or the arrival or the presence. And most of the time Paul uses that because most of the time He is referring to the coming of Christ in relationship to Christians. In that sense it is a coming of

One whom we know. It is the arrival of One whom we love. It is the presence of One that we have come into relationship with. And so there's a sense in which Jesus Christ is not hidden to us. We have not seen Him but we know Him. We have not seen Him but we love Him. And with the eye of

faith and the illuminating ministry of the Spirit of God, we know Him, we know Him by a comprehension of the Old Testament prophecies. We know Him by comprehension of the gospel record. We know Him by the elucidation of the epistles. We know Him in anticipation by that which is in the book of Revelation which is made clear to us by the ministry of the Spirit of God.

So there's a sense in which when we look at the return of Christ, it is for us a coming. It is for us an arrival. It is for us the presence of one who is already known to us. But for unbelievers, it is an apocalypse. It is an apokalupsis, it is an unveiling, it is the appearing of someone whom they have not known, who is hidden to them.

And so, when Paul chooses to use the word apokalupsis or unveiling, he has in mind primarily the coming of Jesus Christ to a world that does not know Him, does not see Him, does not perceive Him. The word then "shall be revealed" in verse 7 is apokalupsis, the Lord Jesus shall be unveiled, the Lord Jesus shall be made visible. The One who has been hidden will come out into the open. The One who has lived in secret will be made public.

Now this word "unveiling" also is used by Paul a number of times to refer to Scripture. Scripture is also an apokalupsis, it's a revelation, it's a disclosure of what otherwise would be hidden. But here he's not talking about the Scripture, the written Word, he's talking about Christ the living Word. And because he wants to emphasize the coming of Christ in relationship to non-believers, as well as believers, he chooses that broader term of the unveiling, or the revealing of the One who to the world has been up-to-now hidden. So Paul is promising what one commentator called "a supernatural invasion from outer space." Emphasizes the unveiling aspect because Jesus is going to be other than the world imagines and He is going to do other than the world imagines. When Jesus comes the second time, He will come in full unveiled divine glory. He will come as the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords to rule the earth with a rod of iron, as we saw in the Psalm earlier, and to crush His enemies like a clay pot.

The first time He came the reality of who He was was hidden. In fact, in John 1 it says, "The world knew Him not." And they still don't. The second time He comes He will not be hidden, He will be revealed and the world will see Him, every eye will see Him and everyone will know exactly who He is.

Were you to have gone into the stable in Bethlehem and looked at the crib, you would have seen a baby. There would have been nothing in that baby's form to have revealed to you who it was. Were you to have lived in a village called Nazareth and to have known a carpenter and his wife by the name of Joseph and Mary and their boy by the name of Jesus, you would have seen a boy, perhaps an unusual boy, but there was nothing you would have seen in Him that would have revealed to you who He really was, the creator of the universe. Were you to have been on those hillsides and along those dusty paths in Galilee or down in Judea when Jesus was ministering as an adult, you would

have seen a man, you would have heard a man, a man who walked and talked and slept, a man who ate and you would have not known by looking at that man who He was for it was veiled. Were you to have seen and heard Him teaching, no matter how profound the things that He said, there would have been nothing on the surface to have proven to you that this was an eternal being, the God of creation. Were you to have stood on the hillside called Golgotha and watched a man nailed to a cross, blood streaming from His body, there would have been nothing that you would have seen with your visual eye that would have indicated to you that this was eternal God who could never die.

That's because the first time He came He was veiled. The first time He came the reality of the fullness of His person was hidden. The next time He comes, it won't be. The next time there will be no Bethlehem, there will be no stable, there will be no manger, there will be no carpenter shop, there will be no humble village. There will be no poverty, no dusty roads to walk, no sinners to attack Him and grieve Him, no false religious leaders to oppose Him. There will be no demons who will stalk His steps, no soldiers to pound nails into His hands and thorns into His brow. There will be no spear run into His side. There will be no cross, not the next time. The next time He comes it is the unveiling. There will be no humble form. There will be no servant form. There will be no human form alone, but only that glorified God/Man in full blazing Shekinah presence.

It never ceases to amaze me how false religious leaders throughout all of history continue to claim that they are the Messiah. Jesus said many false Christs will come. And they do and they come along and they announce that they are Jesus Christ returning. But they, frankly, don't come even remotely close to demonstrating the kind of unveiling that will occur when the real Christ comes back. So much so that the whole world will know who He is. So you can chalk it up. No Messiah, no claimant to the Messianic title, no Christ or claimant to be Christ is who he claims unless the whole world knows it.

Now the apocalypse is described here by three prepositional phrases. The coming of Jesus Christ is described simply as "from heaven," "with His mighty angels," and "in flaming fire." That is not a description of what He does, that is a description of what He is in His appearing. And if we just look at those three we can see something of the wonder of this great event. First of all, it says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven." Obviously the first time He came He came from heaven but He came through the miracle of birth and there was no ability to see Him moving from heaven to earth. The next time He comes it will be visibly. He will come from heaven. Acts chapter 1 verse 9 records the ascension of Jesus at the end of His ministry on earth, when He left. It says, "He was lifted up while they were looking on and a cloud received Him out of their sight." They were there on the Mount of Olives talking with the Lord, His disciples, and all of a sudden He began to ascend and He was lifted up all the way to heaven as a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Two angels appear in verse 11 and tell them this, "Jesus, the same one who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Visibly, physically, in a cloud, He went. Visibly, physically in a cloud He will return. He ascended into heaven,

Hebrews chapter 1 tells us that having gone into heaven He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on High. He took His place at the right hand, that's the power side of God, on the throne of God. Hebrews 8:1, "He took His seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." A minister in the sanctuary. He took His place in God's heavenly holy temple, sitting at the right hand of God. That's where He is right now. He is there interceding for us, He is there functioning at the Father's right hand.

Now the Thessalonians knew this. Chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians it says that Paul told them, "I know you are waiting for His Son from heaven." They knew that Jesus had ascended into heaven. They knew He was coming back from heaven and that's the way He will come. John 14 says He is there now also preparing a place for us so that He can come and get us and take us to be with Him in heaven which He calls the Father's house.

The Lord then is in heaven. And He will come to earth from heaven. If you study the Second Coming of Christ you will study some of the amazing, amazing things that take place at that very juncture. In Matthew 24:30 you will read that when all the earth has gone dark because all of the stars and celestial bodies have been turned down to zero and everything is but blackness and Revelation talks about the same thing, at that particular point the sign of the Son of Man appears in heaven. That's where He's coming from.

Secondly it says He not only comes from heaven, but He comes with His mighty angels. And this too is a common description of the coming of Christ to any Bible student. When He comes back He's not coming by Himself. He's coming, literally the Greek says, "With the angels of His power." The word "His" the pronoun "His" modifies power, not angels. It is not His mighty angels, technically, it is the angels of His power. The point being that angels are not in themselves powerful but are only instruments through which the power that He has is mediated, manifest, revealed or displayed. He comes with the angels who manifest His power. Angels having power delegated to them by Him, mediated through them to accomplish His purposes.

Now I need to just mention a couple of things so that you'll understand this. When it says "He comes with angels," it doesn't mean there's going to be two or three of them with Him. It means that there's going to be a massive number of them, well might include all of the holy angels. We shouldn't be surprised to see angels returning with Jesus Christ since in the Old Testament at various times when God appeared, angels also appeared with Him. If you go back, for example, into Genesis and you will remember when God came to visit Abraham, He brought with Him some angels. You will remember when you move into the book of Exodus chapter 19 as God comes to bring the law, it is with angels in Exodus 19:13, 16 and 19. The presence of God is accompanied by powerful trumpet blasts, no doubt being blown by some angelic creature.

As God moves in the Old Testament He does not move alone. Psalm 68 is a very, very important text in this regard. Verse 17, it says, "The chariots of God, the chariots of God are ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands upon thousands. The Lord is among them as at Sinai in holiness." When God moves, He moves among angels. Ten thousand time ten thousand and thousands of thousands of them. He is among them as at Sinai when He gave the law in holiness.

So in the Old Testament God moved in the company of thousands and thousands of angels. And by the way, the reason it says "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands," and it says it again in the New Testament, is because ancient languages didn't count higher than that. Today the writer might use a different expression were he to want to generally enumerate the vast number of holy angels. We don't know the exact number, but God moves among His holy angels.

In the New Testament Jesus at His appearing will be accompanied in the same way. Again I comment on Matthew chapter 24 because it's essential to this text. "The sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, all the tribes of the earth mourn, they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory and He'll send forth His angels and they move to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth."

In chapter 25 of Matthew, further in the sermon on His own Second Coming, Jesus says, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory and ALL the angels with Him." That's why I say, it is possible that the "all" means all the angels. Some would argue that it might mean all the angels that are with Him are with Him, others might argue that it might mean all the angels with Him are all the angels there are. But He's going to be coming with all the angels.

Matthew chapter 16 Jesus basically says essentially the very same thing. Verse 27, "The Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels." In chapter 13 you'll remember that those parables that talk about the Kingdom and the judgment at the end of the Kingdom have the angels involved in the reaping, Mark 8:38, passages in Luke.

So God appears in the Old Testament in the company of His angels. Christ appears at His Second Coming in the New Testament in the company of His angels. In His humiliation, that was veiled. In His humiliation, do you remember, He said, "If I wanted to I could call for a legion of angels." But He had chosen in His humiliation not to be attended by angels, with the exception of the time, you'll remember, that He was tempted by Satan after 40 days of fasting and the Father sent some angels to minister to Him. But that was because He came veiled, He came alone, He came in humiliation. The next time He comes as God in full blazing glory, accompanied by all the angels.

Thirdly it says, He comes not only from heaven with His mighty angels, but in flaming fire. Again note there will be fire in the judgment which He affects, but that is not the fire spoken of here initially. This is the fire of His coming, or the fire of His presence, or the fire of His glory...not the holocaust as

described say in 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 10 when the elements melt with fervent heat at the heat of His fury, the fire of His judgment. This fire of His presence becomes the fire of His judgment, but here the Apostle Paul describes the glorious Shekinah blazing light of His emanating presence, His holy fire. The kind of fire that you see in the Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost, as cloven tongues of fire, as it were, settled down on an individual. That fire which represents the presence of God, not necessarily the judgment of God. It is the same kind of fire that Moses saw in Exodus chapter 3 verse 2 when the angel of the Lord came and was present in the bush, perhaps a preincarnate appearance of Christ, and it was a flaming fire and the bush was not consumed. It is that fire which does not consume but is the emanating glory of His holy presence. It is that same fire in Exodus chapter 19 verses 16 to 20 that appears as God moves down on the Mount to put forth His law, it is that fire of Deuteronomy chapter 5 and verse 4. And perhaps you can sum it all up in Psalm 104:4 in the description that the psalmist gives there which includes God's presence as fire. He says, "He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers." God is associated with fire. He moves in a blaze, as it were.

Now there is a time and there is a place where that flaming essence becomes a consuming judgment. The burning holy fire becomes a burning judgment fire. But here it is an indication of His deity. Here we find Jesus Christ being presented as God. That's the point here. The Lord Jesus coming from heaven where He has been seated on the very throne of God, coming with mighty angels, which means He moves in the same company that God moves in, coming in flaming Shekinah, blazing glory.

What Paul is saying here is that in every sense this is God, the Son, returning. He comes from heaven where God dwells. He comes with mighty angels who are God's ministers. He comes in flaming fire which is the manifest essence of God's own glory.

And I just point up to you again, there are always foolish people who deny the deity of Jesus Christ and yet when you look at the Word of God and you see a text like this that is such a powerful indicator of His deity, as Paul moves easily from things that are true about God in the Old Testament to saying the same things are true about Jesus in the New. And there's no need to somehow try to explain all of that. He just easily with facility attributes to Jesus exactly what has always been attributed to God. Thus does Paul remind us that when Jesus comes, He comes as God and revealed as God.

We live in the light of that great reality. As Christians, that is our shining hope. And Paul is saying to the Thessalonians, "Look, no matter what you go through, look to this great event and be encouraged." Jesus is coming in unimaginable power, in unbelievable, inexplicable glory with His angels and everyone is going to see Him at His unveiling.

Beloved, this is not speculation. This is not wishful thinking. This is not dreaming. This is prewritten history. Now this event will produce two results...two results. Verse 6, "It is only just for God to repay."

Verse 7, "And to give relief." Verse 8, "Dealing out retribution." Verse 10, "To be glorified in His saints." You see the two things?

Let's sum them up in two words...relief and retribution, relief and retribution. This whole passage from verse 6 to 10 collects around those two poles. You see, when the Apostle John in chapter 10 of Revelation was having a vision about future judgment. In this vision he ate a book, a book about judgment and it was both sweet and bitter. Sweet because when Jesus comes and sets up His glorious Kingdom, that is relief to the saints. Bitter because when He comes it is retribution to the ungodly. And that is the Second Coming of Christ. It is relief, it is retribution.

Those of us who are Christians understand the relief part. Notice in verse 7, "To give relief." That word "relief," *anesis*, has the idea of the absence of tension, the absence of trial. It means to let up. It's the word a Greek would use if he bent his bow and released the string, relaxed it, relief from pressure, relief from trials, relief from hardship, relief from sin. Some translators even translate it with the word "peace." That is not the most common translation but that certainly expresses something of the sense of it. Some would translate it "rest." That's the idea.

When Jesus comes for some people it will be relief. Death will be done with. Sin will be over with in terms of their life. Sorrow will be gone. All will be joy and blessedness. There will be no problems, no pain, no suffering, no disease...relief. That tightness of life, the pressure, the tension, the squeeze will be relaxed in eternal joy.

But for others, retribution. And while Paul is telling the Thessalonians to endure and persevere and wait for relief, he can't just give that side, he has to turn it over and tell the whole story. And so he says, "God's going to repay," in verse 6. And then in verse 8, "Dealing out retribution." And then in verse 9, "These will pay the penalty."

The word "retribution" is kind of a big word, you know what it means? To pay back, basically, with vengeance, to punish. That's exactly what's going to happen when Jesus comes. For Christians, relief...no more injustice, no more sin, no more persecution, no more suffering, no more trials, no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more death. For non-Christians, very different, just the eternal escalation of every imaginable pain, retribution.

Does that seem inconsistent with your understanding of Jesus Christ? To you, what is Jesus Christ like? You can handle the part that He could come back and bring relief, but can you handle the part that He's going to come back and bring retribution? The word retribution there in verse 8 basically means along with the way it's expressed, giving full vengeance, giving complete punishment. And it reminds us that no view of God or Christ is correct unless you understand what it says in Isaiah 66 verse 15, "The Lord is the avenger." The Lord will bring vengeance on sinners, on those who reject Him and His Word. In Isaiah 59:17 it describes God. "He put on righteousness like a breastplate, He

put on a helmet of salvation on His head and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing." Pretty strong. Ezekiel 25:14 speaks about God, the God of vengeance pouring out vengeance on Edom. God is a God of vengeance.

Now this vengeance is not like the unruly, hostile, selfish, sinful passion that makes human beings seek to injure others. It is not sinful vengeance. When we seek vengeance for our own personal reasons out of our own personal passions because we have been offended, such vengeance is not just because we are not so holy as God, because we are not omniscient and cannot know motives, because we are not perfect and cannot render perfect judgment. And so the Bible says, "Leave vengeance to God." It is true we can be wrong. It is true we are wrong. But it is also mandated that we seek no vengeance.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:38 to 48 Jesus deals with vengeance. He says, "If someone slaps you, let them slap you again. If someone takes a piece of your clothing, give them another piece. If someone asks you to go a mile, go another mile." Whatever your enemies do to you, don't persecute them, love them in return. You're not to take vengeance. I'll do that. There will be a day for that. There will be a time for that. And when it happens it will be done right. Romans 3:5, "The God who afflicts wrath is not unrighteous." The man, on the other hand, who afflicts wrath inevitably is unrighteous. But not God, leave it to Him.

His vengeance is not the vengeance of incited passion. It is not the vengeance of the surge of emotion. It is the settled action of perfect, just holiness. And in verse 9 he says, "These will pay the penalty." That's a promise, folks. That's an absolute promise. They will pay. There is no escape. It will happen. It is deserved. It will come. God is a God of vengeance. There is no way to escape that.

Maybe one way to look at it that puts a little window for you to see God more clearly would be to see it this way. Before sin there would be no need for vengeance. Had there been no sin it never would have been manifest. In the Psalms you read things like this, "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance, he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. God will shatter the heads of His enemies. Add to them punishment upon punishment. May they have no acquittal from Thee." The psalmist prays, "Return seven fold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted Thee, O Lord." He prays, "Let there be none to extend kindness to him, nor any pity to his fatherless children." "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock." "Do not I hate them that hate Thee, O Lord...he says...and do not I loathe them that rise up against Thee. I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them my enemies." So says the psalmist in a righteous mood.

John Wenham a writer in England wrote a book called the Goodness of God, says, "Earlier this year fourteen church study groups in Woodford looked at the Old Testament Psalms and concluded that 84 of them were not fit for Christians to sing. Too much vengeance, too much fury, too much wrath."

J.C. Wansey, compiler of a collection of New Testament passages which has been printed for congregational chanting under the title, "A New Testament Psalter," commented about the Old Testament Psalms this way: "These Psalms and parts of many others are full of triable jealousies, blood-thirsty threats and curses, whinings and moanings which are shocking in themselves and time wasting to both God and man. The New Testament Psalms are Christian through and through," end quote. He just wants to jettison the whole Old Testament. He can't do it. That's the character of God.

When God reveals to Jeremiah that the people are plotting Jeremiah's death, he prays, "O Lord of hosts who judges righteously, who tryest the heart and the mind, let me see Thy vengeance upon them for to Thee I have committed my cause." He's saying, "God, are they going to kill me? If they are, kill them first." And what does God say? "Behold, I will punish them, the young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine and none of them shall be left."

Later this tender-hearted weeping prophet gets more bold in what is even a more terrible prayer. Listen to what he says, "Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to my plea. Is evil a recompense for good? They have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before Thee to speak good for them, to turn away Thy wrath, to speak good for them, to turn away Thy wrath from them." In other words, I've preached and I've preached and I've stood before them and they will not believe. "Therefore deliver up their children to famine, give them over to the power of the sword. Let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence and their youths be slain by the sword in battle. Forgive not their iniquity nor blot out their sin from Thy sight." Not the normal prayer of the visiting evangelist. "Lord, whatever You do, please don't save these people."

God answers the prayer in amazing terms. Listen to what God says back. "Behold, I'm bringing such evil upon this place that the ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. Because they have filled this place with the blood of innocence and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, therefore behold days are coming...says the Lord...when this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of Ben Hinnom but the valley of slaughter. I will give their dead bodies for food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, I will make the city a horror, a thing to be hissed at. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its distresses and I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters." God is a God of vengeance.

You say, "Ah yes, but that's the Old Testament." Listen to Paul in the New Testament, he sounds like David. Second Timothy 4:14, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, the Lord will repay him." Sounds like David, doesn't it? "The Lord will repay him according to his deeds." Revelation chapter 6 sounds like the Psalms. "How long, O Lord...verse 10...holy and true will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" No, it's the same. It can be a righteous prayer to pray...God, give him what he deserves...give her what she deserves.

You say, "Now wait a minute though, that's God, that's not Jesus. Jesus is meek and mild and merciful and gracious, gentle and loving." Well, in His incarnation He came veiled, He came alone, He came humble, He came meek, He came mild, He came merciful, gracious, gentle, loving...yes. But the second time you will see Jesus Christ, the same Christ, this same Jesus who was taken up will come back and the very same Jesus will not be meek and mild, merciful and mild, gracious and loving. He will come as an avenging executioner.

Now this shouldn't surprise you. In Matthew's gospel at the very outset in chapter 3 we are introduced to the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist is announcing the arrival of Jesus Christ. He doesn't say this, "Christ is coming and He has a wonderful plan for your life." He doesn't say that. He doesn't say, "Christ is coming to try to fix your marriage." He doesn't say, "Christ is coming to try to make you happy." "Christ is coming to try to solve your problems." "Christ is coming to make you wealthy." "Christ is coming to make you prosperous."

He says, "He's coming and in His hand...Matthew 3:12...is a winnowing fork and He's going to clear the threshing floor and He's going to gather the wheat into the barn and the chaff He's going to burn with unquenchable fire." Jesus is coming and He's either going to put you in the barn, or He's going to burn you with a fire that never goes out. Jesus is coming and, frankly, He's got a terrible plan for your life. Is that your mental picture of Jesus?

John chapter 5 Jesus said this, "Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and all who hear shall live." What's going to happen? Verse 29, "They'll come out of the grave. Those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds, to a resurrection of judgment. And then verse 30, "My judgment is just," He says. Verse 27, "God gave Me authority to execute judgment."

Jesus took a whip and He overturned the tables and He cleansed the temple and said, "You'll not make My Father's house a den of thieves." No, the ministry of Jesus had a note of warning that sounds the same as God. He said, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you. Depart from Me...He said...you cursed into eternal fire." That's what He said. As He talked about His own Second Coming, speaking about it in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 46 He said, "These will go away into eternal punishment." He said, "Curse you, Chorazin, curse you, Bethsaida, it will be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you."

You mean to say that God, the God of the Old Testament destroyed those two cities and Jesus the Christ of the New Testament will do worse?" "Curse you, Pharisees...Curse you, scribes." "Curse you who build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed." "Curse you who have taken away the key of knowledge." "Temptations of sin are sure to come, but curse the one by whom they come. It would be better if a millstone were hanged around his neck and he were drowned." "Curse that man

by whom I have been betrayed." Jesus went around cursing a lot of people which was consigning them to hell, consigning them to judgment.

Some of His parables taught how angry God is with sinners. He told a parable about a man who owned a vineyard and he leased it out to some people to operate and He sent His servant to get the results, to take the money that had been earned after the workers were paid. And you remember, they beat up all the people that he sent and finally he said, "I'll send my son." And he sent his son and they killed the son. And Jesus teaching in the temple to the Pharisees said, "What do you think that man's going to do to those people who killed his son?" Well you know what they're going to say...why that guy is going to lose his life. And Jesus said...that's right. Those people who killed his son are going to lose their life. And that's just the point. God sent you the prophets and you abused them. God sent you His Son and you killed Him. What do you think God's going to do to you?

Jesus reiterates the vengeance of God. When Jesus comes...two things: relief, retribution. Next week we're going to see the why, who and how of both of those.

Lord, we thank you for the time we've had this morning and the clarity with which Your Word confronts us on the fact that You are a God of vengeance as well as a God of blessing. Blessing and cursing, blessing and cursing. You said to Your people, "I put before you blessing and cursing, choose...choose." Father, we are again this morning many millennia from that original question, will you choose blessing or cursing, but still men and women sit in this very moment at the crossroads of that choice. May they choose blessing. May they choose Christ. May they choose salvation. May they choose forgiveness so that when Jesus comes it is for them relief, rest from all sin and sorrow and trial and difficulty forever and not retribution which is the intensification of all of those things forever. We know Jesus is coming. We don't know why, but may we be prepared. We also know that it is very likely that many in this place today will die before He comes, should He delay His coming. And should they die, the choice is fixed forever and retribution will be theirs if they die without Him. So, Father, speak to every heart. May those who wait the coming of Christ from heaven because it brings relief from the battle of sin, the battle with the flesh, the battle with the world, the battle with the devil, may we rejoice and endure and may those for whom His coming is retribution repent and embrace the Savior who offers rest. We pray in His great name. Amen.

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