

*Lord*” in their entire region of the world. And this they did in spite of the fact that they were under *“much affliction,”* and many *“persecutions.”*

1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 - 7 so that **you became an example to all the believers** in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For **the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place** your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.  
NASU

See here the mighty power of Christ to transform lives, and even when the devil wages serious war against His work, the church only thrives all the more abounding in faith, love and persevering through the worst of affliction.

**2 Thessalonians 1:5-6** - 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will 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, NASU

A. 5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering – The *“plain indication”* here is what directly precedes in context, *“your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”* That is, at *“the righteous judgment of God,”* the *“persecutions and afflictions”* that the Thessalonians are enduring, will be both the evidence of their *“perseverance and faith,”* as well as the evidence for condemnation for their persecutors. No one will wonder at or question, either the wicked or the faithful, if God’s judgment is righteous at the great Day, because the evidence will be so *“plain”* that the Christians were so unjustly treated. These *“persecutions”* will be serious evidence implicating the wicked of their unbelief and rejection of Christ, and the *“perseverance and faith”* of the Christians will be the *“plain indication”* of their **genuine belief** in Christ, for they did not shrink back even under great pressure. It is on account of their enduring *“perseverance and faith”* that they will *“be considered worthy of the kingdom of God,”* the very thing *“for which indeed you are suffering.”* Paul make a similar statement and puts forth the same principle in Philippians.

Philippians 1:27-30 - 27 Only conduct yourselves in a **manner worthy of the gospel of Christ**; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 in no way alarmed by your opponents — **which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.** 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, **30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me,** and now hear to be in me. NASB

Why is it that these Thessalonians are suffering persecution? The simple answer is they believe and *preach* Christ and Him crucified as God’s only way of salvation for a world of rebellious sinners, and because of this, many unbelieving people so strongly oppose the message that they reject, ridicule and even physically harm those who preach it. It seems evident to me, that because the Thessalonians were so vocal about their faith, that they were the objects of much affliction from the unbelievers. Most people in the world are perfectly accepting if you believe such a thing, but it is when you **preach** the message that they become inflamed. Learn here, the suffering and persecutions that Christians endure because they believe and preach Christ and Him crucified, is genuine evidence of their real faith **AND** genuine evidence of the unbelieving rejection of their persecutors.

B. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you – Here Paul speaks of the fundamental realities about sin, righteousness and God’s judgment, and so he says *“is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.”* Leon Morris says, *“in a moral universe sin cannot go unpunished,”* and, *“because God is just we must expect the ultimate righting of wrongs, that God will repay seems an essential constituent of any teaching about God’s judgment.”* Paul says, *“For after all,”* that is, when it is all said and done in the end when God brings His judgment, it will be *“just,”* equitable, righteous, according to the perfect

lawful standard of what is good and upright, which can only be *defined* by the Almighty God who Himself is the only Judge of the living and the dead, and altogether the standard of what is good, right, and perfectly just. It is a matter of justice for Christ to “*repay with affliction those who afflict you,*” for they were surely being treated unjustly by their persecutors. One thing is for sure in view here, Christ is coming and when He comes, He will settle the millennia long disputes that have brought so many to persecute Christians throughout the ages. If you think this is only an ancient problem, consider that **more Christians died for their faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century than in all other centuries combined.**

**2 Thessalonians 1:7** - 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, NASU  
A. and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well – Here Paul clearly teaches that Christ’s return is to be viewed as **imminent**. That is, that the Thessalonians were told by Paul to expect Christ to come and “*give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well*” so that they are to eagerly await this deliverance from the persecutors. Of course one major rule in Bible interpretation is to understand the **historical context** of the writing to grasp who the recipients of the writing are, and what was the historical situation they find themselves in, including cultural influence and cultural thoughts and expressions. It is clear from this passage that Paul was telling them that Christ’s coming was **imminent**, and that they should expect Him to come and deliver them. Imminency was a theme in the words of Jesus Himself (and also the other NT writers), especially for example in the *Olivet Discourse* in Matthew 24, but also a main theme in Matthew 25 in the parable of the *Ten Virgins*.

**Matthew 24:21-31** - 21 for then **there will be a great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. 22 "And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but **for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short**..... 25 "**Behold, I have told you in advance**.....29 "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 heavens will be shaken, 30 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**. NASB

**Matthew 24:42-44** - 42 "Therefore **be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming**. 43 "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44 "**For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will**. NASB

**Matthew 25:1-13** - "Then **the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins**, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 "And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent..... 13 "**Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour**. NASB

Eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return was a fundamental part of Christian life in the teaching of the Apostles as well, and they frequently tied our Christian hope to **the day of His appearing**.

**Titus 2:11-13** - 11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 **looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**; NASB

**Hebrews 9:28** - 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, **shall appear a second time for salvation** without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. NASB

**1 Peter 1:13** - 13 Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, **fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ**. NASB

**1 John 3:2** - 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him**, because we shall see Him just as He is. NASB

Therefore we Christians are to be eagerly awaiting Christ’s return, as they were, being watchful of the signs of the times as His return draws ever nearer. See here that Paul was comforting these

Christians telling them that they would receive relief and vindication personally from Christ Himself, **“when He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire.”**

But what of the question of **Preterism**, whereas these texts are read as to say that because imminency was taught to that generation, that that generation was in fact going to see the fulfillment of these things. To that I answer, that surely some of the things in the Olivet Discourse did have some fulfillment, but the full scope of events spoken of by Jesus did NOT in fact come to pass yet. For example, the Great Tribulation has not yet come to pass (Matt 24:21-22), the Gospel has not been preached to the whole world (Matt 24:14), and Christ has not come in the clouds with power and great glory with all of His angels and raptured the church (Matt 24:29-31). To be fair, Preterists do think these events are analogous to actual events that happened before or during the end of the age of the Old Covenant and the destruction of the Temple and Jewish system in 70 A.D., reading these texts in an *allegorical* manner. It is my firm conviction however, that these are not allegories, and I read these texts in a *historical grammatical* sense, fully expecting the literal fulfillment of these events at the future Second Coming of Christ. That makes me a **Futurist**, (under which Amill, Postmill, and Premillennialism are classified), seeing the imminent return of Christ as a yet future event. On this topic I would say that our text here in 2 Thessalonians is bright shining evidence that the coming Christ is yet future because of the simple fact that Christ did not come to the generation of Thessalonians who received this letter and delivered them from their persecutors. In fact, Christians have been undergoing persecution for some 2000 years now, and this deliverance by a glorious appearing of Christ coming from heaven has yet to occur. That however does not mean that we are to dismiss Jesus and the Apostles teaching about imminency, but ARE in fact to be eagerly awaiting His return and deliverance. We simply believe that the texts on imminency will directly apply to that generation that is alive at the Second Coming of Christ.

B. when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire – Here now Paul continues to comfort the persecuted Thessalonians by reminding them that Christ is coming in power to give deliverance to His people and to vindicate them by a terrible vengeance poured out on their enemies. This then is another text wherein Paul gives us more details of the coming (parousia Gk) of Christ, here now in the context of what He will do to the wicked unbelievers at His return. You remember that Paul had previously taught them that **“sudden destruction”** would come upon the unbelievers, and that **“they will not escape”** the fierce judgment of Christ at the **“Day of the Lord,”** when He will return to deliver His people AND destroy the unbelieving world.

**1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** - 2 For you yourselves know full well that **the day of the Lord** will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" **then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.**

Paul specifically says that the Christians deliverance will come **“when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire.”** He speaks then of the Second Coming of Christ, which He had given them some teaching about already, but here more specifically is addressing the fact that He is coming to destroy their enemies, who are persecuting them severely. And so the emphasis is placed on Christ coming in power to destroy these enemies and the events that will unfold for their enemies. In speaking of this coming He calls it **“when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven.”** Consider several things here. First he is the **“Lord Jesus,”** emphasizing His sovereign lordship, who will put an end to these unbelievers who are troubling and persecuting His people. Second, He will be **“revealed from Heaven in flaming fire.”** Notice here the word for **“revealed”** is the Gk *apokalupsis*, meaning “revelation, unveiling, uncovering.” The idea is that He is not evident to eyes in plain sight, but there will come a day, yes even the Second Coming, when He will be **“revealed from heaven.”** This