

All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶ God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷ and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸ He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ¹⁰ on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. (NIV84)

Theme: Our Just Lord will Come Again.

1. He will come with judgment
2. He will come with relief.

You have heard of the expression: “the anticipation is killing me!” We’ve all said or thought something similar. It means that you can’t wait for something to happen, for some event to get here, to hear some news you’ve been waiting for. We anticipate things all the time. A player or a fan waiting for the big game. A student waiting Christmas break or summer vacation. A young kid waiting for Christmas morning or his birthday. A spouse waiting to hear the latest medical report of a loved one. We wait and we wait, and sometimes the anticipation seems too much to bear.

There is one thing that, as Christians, we are all waiting for. We all anticipate the coming of the Lord. So today, on Last Judgment Sunday, God assures us that our just Lord will come again. He will come with judgment and he will come with relief.

God has to remind us of that every so often. He has to remind us that he is coming because it’s been so long and we let our minds wander. Jesus says four times in the book of Revelation, **I am coming soon**. If he is coming soon, where is he? our sinful nature asks. We’ve been waiting and waiting. For some of us, the anticipation seems to be too much to handle. And there is that temptation simply to give up. The

devil tries to convince us that Jesus isn’t going to come again. If he said soon, and it hasn’t been soon, then he is not coming at all. But we know better. Again and again in his Word we see that Christ is coming again. Take verse 10 of our text for an example, in it Paul talks about **the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed**. Or take Jesus’ words in Matthew 25, **When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory**. God promised to send Adam and Eve a Savior. But he didn’t send him right away—but thousands of years later. And he didn’t send him until everything was just right. In his second letter Peter is talking about Christ’s return when he says, **With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day**. In our minds, it may seem like a long time, but not to our eternal God. He will come soon—and he will come when everything is just right.

As we wait for his return, Christ gave us some warning signs. These remind us that the time is near. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes, family strife, and false teachers are all signs of the end. And since these have been going on since before Christ came, we know that Christ can come at any time. But things are going to get worse. Sin and debauchery will only become more and more prevalent. Wickedness will reign while Christians suffer. Satan will have his “little season” so to speak—right before the end. It will be a time when sin and wickedness will be prevalent. Jesus explains it this way, **There will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again**.

The Thessalonians knew all about great distress. They faced persecution every day. Paul visited Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. The Holy Spirit worked through the gospel that Paul preached and some Jews and a good number of Gentiles believed. But the unbelieving Jews became jealous. They broke into the house where Paul was staying, looking to kill him. Paul got away and fled to Berea. When they Jews found out that Paul was there they went to Berea, they stirred up the crowd and made them hostile to Paul, forcing him to leave. Apparently the persecution of the Christians in Thessalonica lasted much longer. Much of his first letter to the Thessalonians is dedicated to encouraging them as they faced

persecution. And as we read his second letter we can tell that they persecution continued.

We may not be persecuted as the Paul or the Thessalonians, but we still suffer. We still have to face the effects of the wickedness of the world. And it's only getting worse. The attacks on Christians and their faith is becoming more and more prevalent as of late. Some studies indicate that more than 100,000 Christians are killed each year around the world because of their faith. More and more people attach basic Christian teachings. Some locations have made it a crime to obey certain teachings of God. Being a Christian is no longer normal. Christian morals are looked upon as old fashioned. Obedience the Lord is mocked. Wickedness is growing. People are bolder in their sins. And we often feel the brunt of their actions.

That is why Christ will come again. As he says in Matthew 24, **If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.** When Christ comes again he will come to put an end to this sinful wicked world. And he will come with judgment. And his judgment will be just. That is it will be right and fair. As Paul says in verse 6, **God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you.** God will punish those who make us suffer. Those who mistreat us will get what they deserve. God will deal justly with all those who sin against him. Christ explains this judgment in Matthew 25, **All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.** What is the basis for his judgment? Faith. Those who believe will be saved, those that don't believe will be condemned. Paul puts in this way in verse 8, **He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** These aren't two separate people, but one and the same. Those that don't know God are those that don't believe in him. They don't know him and his grace. Those that don't obey him also refers to unbelievers. For those who don't strive to obey God are not believers. And so they will be punished. They will be condemned to live with the devil forever. Hell is the separation from God—his love and protection. As Paul explains, **They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.**

And there are no excuses. It doesn't matter if someone never heard the gospel. It doesn't matter if they believed at one time. There are no excuses—no second chances. It doesn't matter if they are good people who generally do what is right. It doesn't matter what they believe—if they don't believe in Jesus Christ as the one and only Savior of the world and that we are saved by grace through faith, apart from works—they won't be saved. They will be punished. And that judgment from God is just.

As Christians we anticipate the coming of our Lord when he will give a just judgment on the world and punish all unbelievers. But we don't anticipate this great day simply because he will destroy all the wicked, but that he will give us relief on that day.

In verse 7 Paul says that on Judgment Day **Christ will give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well.** He will come to give relief. Relief from this world. Relief from persecution. From getting mocked and ridiculed. Relief from all the wickedness and debauchery. Relief from earthquakes and other natural disasters. Relief from sickness and disease. Relief from sorrow. Relief from death. For not only will Christ condemn those who persecute us, he will also give us eternal life. We will be free from sin and its effects—including death. Salvation is what awaits us. Judgment Day is a day of destruction for unbelievers. But a day of rejoicing for believers. So it is a day we wait for with eager anticipation.

And so when we suffer on this earth we don't have to worry. We don't have to be afraid of what people think of us. Or what they say about us. Or what they may do to us. We may suffer again and again on this earth. But we realize this life is only temporary. So when we suffer our eyes look ahead. Our minds are on what awaits. We long for the relief that is coming. We eagerly anticipate our eternal life.

But I thought God was just? That isn't just, is it? It's not fair that we are given relief. It isn't just that God would save us. For we are nothing but sinners. We constantly sin against God. We fail to obey his commands. We deserve his wrath and punishment. Why would then God save us? Why would he give us relief? That isn't just. God is just in that he does not let sin go unpunished. But he doesn't punish us. He punished Christ instead. For on the cross Christ took all

our sins upon himself. He became sin for us, becoming guilty of everything we have done wrong. So he was forsaken by God the Father. He suffered through the pain and agony of hell in our place. So our punishment was paid for. God is just. And so he gives relief for all those who believe in him.

And so we glorify him. We sing his praises. For he is our just judge. But he is much more than that. He is our God. He is our Savior. And he will come in his full glory. With all his angels and blazing fire. And all people will know that Jesus is God. Everyone, both believers and unbelievers will know that Jesus is the Savior of the world. All will bow down to him. And those that believed will rejoice and glorify his name.

We can't wait for that great and glorious day to come. In the meantime we wait with eager anticipation. And we prepare our hearts and minds for his coming. We study his Word. We worship him on a regular basis. We tell others what he has done. So that they too may long for his coming. So that they too may anticipate the relief he will bring us.

The just judge is coming. Although it may not seem like it, he is coming soon. Judgment Day may not sound pleasant. But it is for believers. Our just God will punish unbelievers in their wickedness and sin. But he brings relief from this world for all believers. He will come in glory so we may glorify him. So we wait and anticipate. And we long for our just judge to come. Amen.