

Rest from Persecution AFTER the Tribulation

2 Thessalonians 1

Copyright © Tim Warner
Revised September 11, 2007

Second Thessalonians was written soon after the first Epistle to correct further questions and misconceptions about the coming of Christ. In his previous Epistle, Paul tied the resurrection to the rapture, thereby comforting them concerning those who had died. In the fifth chapter he encouraged them to be expecting the coming of Christ. The Thessalonian church was experiencing severe persecution and had lost some of its members to martyrdom, (1 Thess. 2:14). Apparently, this persecution was interpreted by some as the fulfillment of "great tribulation" Jesus mentioned in the Olivet Discourse. Since Paul had instructed them to be watching for the "Day of the Lord," many of them mistakenly thought the tribulation was nearly over, and Christ was about to return momentarily. This unfounded excitement caused Paul to write again to these dear saints, correcting their misconception, and encouraging them to await the signs Jesus gave in His Olivet Discourse.

2 Thess 1:4-10

4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

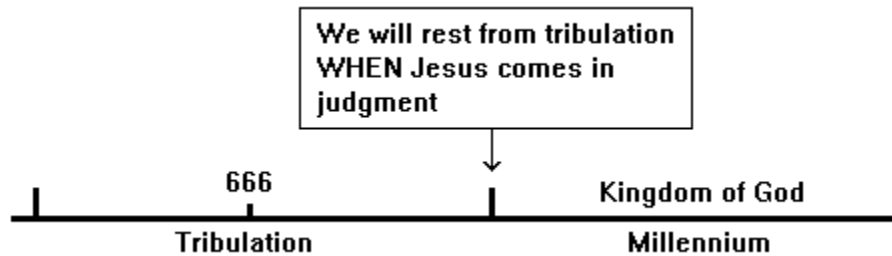
*7 and to give you who are troubled **rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,***

8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

*10 **when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe,** because our testimony among you was believed.*

Notice first of all, believers will rest from persecution when Jesus is revealed from heaven in judgment, (1:7). Since this coming in judgment is posttribulational, the rapture must also be posttribulational.



There is only one logical interpretation of this passage regarding the timing of the rapture. No one will deny this coming is "posttributational." No pretribulationist believes Jesus will come in flaming fire, bringing vengeance on the ungodly, before the tribulation! However, many passages speak of Christ's coming in judgment after the tribulation. This passage makes it perfectly clear that Christians will "rest" from tribulations at that time. Paul was in effect telling them when their ordeal would end, at the posttribulation coming of Christ in judgment. In a pretribulation rapture scenario, Christians would have already been resting for seven years before this event, making Paul's statement dubious and illogical. Paul was trying to comfort the Thessalonian Christians in their persecutions. Yet, his encouragement was not centered around an alleged "any moment" pretribulation rapture, whereby they might expect immediate relief, but looked forward to the appearing of Christ in glory. By connecting their relief from persecution with the posttributational coming of Christ, Paul effectively placed the rapture after the tribulation. Notice also, that he connected their seeing Christ and admiring Him for the first time with the same coming in judgment, (1:10).