

Biblical Notes — 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

"In response to this argument, there are two ways that 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 can be harmonized with the existence of an intermediate kingdom (Rev 20:1-10) separating the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-21) and the final judgment of unbelievers (Rev 20:11-15). The first way is to appeal to the dynamic of prophetic foreshortening. According to this view, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 presents the Second Coming and the final Judgment together as if the two events will happen simultaneously, even though a lengthy gap of time—the millennial reign of Christ—will separate the two... In other words, details about the interval of time between the immediate relief of the saints and the ultimate retribution of the wicked were not included because they did not serve Paul's primary purpose in writing. Paul's goal was not to set forth an exhaustive presentation of eschatological events, but rather to assure his persecuted readers that the justice of God would prevail. Therefore, the apostle focused on comforting the Thessalonian church by emphasizing the certainty of this coming relief and retribution, without clarifying the existence of an interval of time between the two."

— Matthew W. Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model, (The Woodlands, Tx, Kress Christian Publications, 2016), 125-126.

"The second way that 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 can be harmonized with an intermediate kingdom is very similar to the first. According to this view, the divine retribution of the wicked begins at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-21; Matt 25:31-46); it continues in the intermediate state as unbelievers experience conscious torment during the millennial kingdom (cf. Luke 16:19-31); and it culminates when they are resurrected at the final judgment and cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15)." In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10, the apostle Paul compresses the stages of this divine judgment into a simplified portrayal of God bringing relief to the Thessalonians when Jesus returns by dealing out retribution to their unbelieving persecutors." The strength of this view is that it affirms precisely what is taught in 2 Thessalonians 1—that the divine retribution of unbelievers will begin at the Second Coming (vv. 7, 10) and will continue into the eternal state as they "pay the penalty of eternal destruction" (v. 9). To harmonize Paul's presentation of divine retribution in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 with the two-stage judgment in Isaiah 24:21-23 and Revelation 19-20, it is helpful to recognize that the former can set forth the eschatological judgment of God with less precision without contradicting the more detailed presentation of the latter. In the process, it is helpful to remember that Paul's purpose in 2 Thessalonians 1 was to comfort the persecuted church in Thessalonica, not to set forth all of the future events concerning the eschatological judgment of unbelievers. Therefore, even though the judgment of God's enemies is portrayed elsewhere as taking place in two stages separated by a lengthy period of time—being described as "many days" in Isaiah 24:22 and a "thousand years" in Revelation 20:1-6—it did not serve Paul's purpose in 2 Thessalonians 1 to make those same distinctions. There is nothing in 2 Thessalonians 1 which precludes the existence of an intermediate kingdom or the straightforward reading of Revelation 19-21.

— Matthew W. Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model, (The Woodlands, Tx, Kress Christian Publications, 2016), 126-127.