

One truth shared: Jesus will come back in justice to judge the living and the dead.

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. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 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. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 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.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A Day of Terror for All Those Who Troubled God's People

There hasn't been a day like it for more than two decades. On this one specific day, nearly every single American had their eyes glued to the television watching news coverage of one specific event—the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. It was an awful and tragic day as many were left reeling in fear, anger, and frustration. Questions flooded the minds of many, including Christians. “Why God? Why would you let this happen? When are you going to do something about it?”

It's deeply saddening, and yes even maddening, to see the evil and wickedness around us in the world. Teens today weren't alive yet when 9/11 happened, but surely you have seen and heard many details about that day. But though you might not have been born yet, there have definitely been plenty of tragedies since. School shootings, racial injustice, and too many more everyday evils seen on the news and online video clips.

As if the evil around us isn't enough pressure to face, there is also the constant squeeze that the unbelieving world puts on Christians. They laugh at our faith. They scoff our beliefs. They poke fun, call names, accuse, and sometimes blatantly hate us.

Living with all these things, perhaps you have had questions enter your mind like, “Why God? Why would you let this happen? When are you going to do something about it?”

The words of the apostle Paul from 2 Thessalonians 1 bring us unique comfort. We certainly try to love and forgive our enemies as Jesus did and taught us. We want them to know Christ, and just as our God, we want “all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). However, we also know the harsh reality that far too many live as enemies of Christ and us, his people. So Paul comforts us and encourages us to be patient. Here's why: There will be a day when Jesus brings justice and vengeance on all our (and thus his) enemies.

Perhaps too often we simply think of Jesus as our BFF, a nice guy who loves us and will help us. While Jesus certainly is loving, caring, and compassionate, we sometimes may forget that Jesus is also the mighty Alpha and Omega, the King of kings and Lord of lords who will come back in blazing fire and glory to judge the living and the dead.

When you see evil in this world, when you face pressure and persecution, first pray for those people who don't yet know Christ. But then, take heart! Jesus will bring those enemies to justice, and he will bring you safely to your heavenly home!

Prayer: Jesus, King of glory, in your grace you redeemed me from my greatest enemies—sin, death, and the devil. Now come back in your glory and justice to deliver me from the evil of this world. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year C

Proper 28

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A Day of Terror for All Those Who Troubled God's People

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- What do you see as the greatest atrocities and evils in the world today?
- What "enemies" personally cause you to feel the most persecution and pressure?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

Why do you find it difficult to be patient in waiting for Jesus to return?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- How do these verses serve as both a source of comfort and of caution?
- *Agree/Disagree.* God is not a loving God if he punishes people and sends them to hell. Defend your answer.
- *Explain this statement.* God's justice and God's grace meet at the cross.
- Describe a proper Christian response to enemies of Christ and his cross.

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

Give a summary in your own words of how judgment day is both a day of terror and a day of hope.