



Seized Before the Day

"Apocalypse Wow Factor"

Extreme Makeover is a popular TV show that follows people through an intense process of changing the way they look. The procedures include the usual changes in wardrobe, make-up, and hairstyle. The more extreme procedures include liposuction, facelift, rhinoplasty, cosmetic dentistry, chin implants, fat injections, and ear pinning.

The press release for the show says this:

Each episode will feature two people, seen first in their "before" phase, then as they undergo their various procedures, and finally, in a **climactic unveiling** — "the after" — when the candidates reveal their new selves to their families and friends.

You may not be interested in TV's *Extreme Makeover*... But, if you are a Christian, **you are already being made-over and you will experience a climactic unveiling.**

Our chapter describes the return of Jesus to the earth in what is called the Second Coming. The Second Coming occurs after Christians have been taken to Heaven in the rapture, and after the seven-year Tribulation on the earth.

All the Christians of the Church Age, who are here called "saints," will return with Jesus in His Second Coming to the earth.

In verse ten you read that when Jesus returns to earth, He will "be glorified **in** His saints and... be admired among all those who believe."

The Amplified Bible puts it this way: "When He comes to be glorified in His saints [on that day He will be made more glorious in His consecrated people], and [He will] be marveled at and admired [in His glory reflected] in all who have believed..."

Jesus will be revealed in all His glory, but part of that revelation will be in His glory being reflected in you and I in our glorified state as we return with Him.

The Bible says that, "when He appears, we shall be like Him" (1John 3:2). You will have a glorified physical body – a body that can handle life in Heaven for all eternity. And your spirit will have been perfected to be without sin.

The angels in Heaven and the people on the earth who survive the Tribulation will see the radical physical and spiritual transformation that has occurred in us. It will be a climactic unveiling – the ultimate "Extreme Makeover" - after which we will forever be on display as illustrations of what the power and grace of God have accomplished in those who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you,

The first five verses of the letter established that the church was not in the period of time we most commonly call the Great Tribulation. In the world they would have tribulation; but they would not be in the world during the Great Tribulation.

It will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in the Great Tribulation for they are not always punished here as they deserve.

Paul wrote as if the living nonbelievers troubling them right then would be judged shortly, in the Great Tribulation and then at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He wasn't looking to the final judgment at the resurrection of the dead that will take place after the thousand year kingdom at the Great White Throne.

In other words, he felt all this could occur very soon - certainly in his lifetime. He believed the resurrection and rapture of the church was imminent, and that the Second Coming was very close.

Just because Jesus hasn't returned doesn't make Paul wrong about the Second Coming. Every generation ought to live as though they are the last one before The Lord is revealed from Heaven.

Paul was talking about nonbelievers being punished with "tribulation" during the Great Tribulation. But we can expand our thinking beyond that to ask if God will punish the wicked forever.

There is a historical debate among Christians about future punishment in general and regarding Hell in particular. A classic argument is that nonbelievers are simply annihilated - as if they never existed in the first place.

It has also become fashionable for Christians to try to deny the existence of a literal Hell altogether.

It would be nice to be able to say there was no future punishment, no Hell; but it would not be biblical.

Verses like this one destroy arguments for annihilationism and the like. You can't say that annihilation is a kind of repayment for sinning against God's saints. It makes no sense.

It's pretty clear that there is a time of judgment coming upon the earth and a future judgment of all those who have ever lived.

2 Thessalonians 1:7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,

Jesus will be "revealed from heaven." "Revealed" is the word from which we get the word *apocalypse*. It is the unveiling of His majesty and glory and power at His Second Coming.

In His first coming Jesus' majesty and glory and power were veiled in human flesh. In His Second Coming He will be unveiled for all the world to see.

He will be revealed "from heaven." Just as He ascended physically and bodily into Heaven after His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus will return physically and bodily from Heaven.

He will be revealed from Heaven "with His mighty angels." We read in other passages that His mighty angels gather together the survivors of the Tribulation so that believers are separated from nonbelievers.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 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.

The believers who survive the Tribulation will find the flaming fire of Jesus to be light and warmth and purifying. The nonbelievers will be punished by it. They will be the subjects of retribution.

"Retribution" is the meaning of the word translated "vengeance" in verse eight. Our ideas about vengeance come mostly from TV and movie heroes who deal out brutal vengeance from anger. It's more like retaliation or revenge.

God's retribution is not like that at all. His retribution is the calm, controlled, just punishment meted out by the perfectly Righteous Judge upon those who have willfully violated His perfect law and refused His offers of salvation.

Nonbelievers are identified in verse eight as those "who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Second Coming of Jesus will be preceded by unprecedented preaching of the Gospel all over the earth to every person on the earth. If I am recalling the Revelation of Jesus Christ correctly, there are the two invincible witnesses during the first half of the Tribulation; the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who cannot be killed; and occasionally angels warn men from the atmosphere.

Nonbelievers "do not know God" because they refused to "obey the Gospel." It will be their willful decision, for which they will be held accountable for all eternity.

What will be their punishment?

2 Thessalonians 1:9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

"Punished" can be translated *pay the penalty*. In His first coming, Jesus died on the Cross to pay the penalty for mankind's sin. As He dismissed His spirit to heaven He cried out, "Tetelstai," which is often translated, "It is finished," but also means, "Paid-in-full."

Sin carries a penalty: "the wages of sin is death." The penalty must be paid. Either you pay it... Or Jesus pays it for you.

If you refuse and reject Jesus, then you pay the penalty of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." "Destruction" (sadly) does not mean annihilation. It means ruination. It does not mean the cessation of your existence, but the ruination of everything that makes your existence worthwhile. One author wrote that "unbelievers will pass into a night on which no morning dawns."

It will be far worse than darkness. In other places it is described as "torment"; a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" where there is "no rest night or day" and where the "fire is not quenched."

The devil and his fallen angels will be there; but they will not be ruling a kingdom or meting out any suffering. They will be suffering intensely as well. And, in the eternal darkness of Hell, I doubt any of its inhabitants will see anything ever again.

"The presence of the Lord and the glory of His power" were the things you were created to enjoy in eternal fellowship with God... Which gets us back to where we started:

2 Thessalonians 1:10 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.

When Jesus returns with His saints, the believers and nonbelievers who have survived the Tribulation on the earth will see just what God had in mind all along in creating the human race. You will be glorified, perfected, ready to share endless ages of joy with God. All because you "believed" - because you believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior when you heard the Gospel.

That's why I titled this, *"Apocalypse Wow Factor."*

The last two verses are the application:

2 Thessalonians 1:11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,
2 Thessalonians 1:12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In light of your future glory, you have three responsibilities in your present suffering. These are captured by three words: worthy, walk, and witness.

1. "Worthy" in these verses applies to the present. It is an encouragement to live up to your calling by enduring suffering.
2. Your walk is described in verse eleven. The NIV translates the words this way: "That by His power [God] may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act promoted by your faith." The idea is to let God empower you to endure suffering.

3. Your witness is to have "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... glorified in you, and you in Him..." You are to reveal Jesus by enduring your suffering until your suffering ends.

All of this is only possible "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

You were saved by grace; your life is sustained by grace. When you are satisfied in your suffering that God's grace is sufficient for you it is a witness that reveals Jesus until He's revealed at His coming.

Bottom line: We are to reveal Him in our suffering now and through our glorification later.