

2 Thessalonians 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God,
and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Analysis

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—Christ appears **in flaming fire** (en pyri phlogos, ἐν πυρὶ φλογός), echoing God's Sinai theophany (Ex. 19:18). **Taking vengeance** (didontos ekdikēsin, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν, literally 'giving justice/vindication') shows Christ as righteous judge, not merely loving Savior.

Two groups face judgment: **them that know not God** (pagan idolaters) and those who **obey not the gospel** (those who heard but rejected). Obeying (hypakouousin, ὑπακούουσιν) the gospel means submitting to its claims, not mere intellectual assent. Paul identifies the persecutors—they've spurned divine revelation. Fire represents both God's holiness and His consuming wrath against sin.

Historical Context

In Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Messiah would come with fire to judge Israel's enemies. Paul universalizes this—all who reject God, whether pagan or religious, face the same fiery judgment. The gospel demands obedience (response of faith), not optional consideration.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does 'obeying the gospel' differ from merely believing facts about Jesus?
2. What does Christ's return in flaming fire teach about God's holy nature?
3. Are there people in your life who 'know not God' despite religious activity?

Interlinear Text

ἐν πυρὶ φλογός διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ^ν
In fire flaming taking vengeance G3588 not G3361
G1722 G4442 G5395 G1325 G1557

εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ
on them that know God and G3588 not that obey G3588
G1492 G2316 G2532 G3361 G5219

εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
the gospel Lord of our Jesus Christ
G3588 G2962 G2257 G2424 G5547

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 4:17 (References God): For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

2 Peter 3:7 (References God): But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Hebrews 10:27 (Kingdom): But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Psalms 79:6 (Kingdom): Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

Hebrews 10:30 (References Lord): For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

Hebrews 2:3 (References Lord): How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

Romans 6:16 (Parallel theme): Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Matthew 25:41 (Parallel theme): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Galatians 4:8 (References God): Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

Revelation 20:10 (Parallel theme): And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.